
A
SOUVENIR
RELEASED ON THE OCCASION
OF THE
EXHIBITION ON
SOUTH INDIAN BRONZES



GOVERNMENT MUSEUM MADRAS
1992.



SOUVENIR RELEASED BY

Dr. J. JAYALALITHA

HON'BLE CHIEF MINISTER OF TAMIL NADU

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

INAUGURATION OF THE EXHIBITION ON

SOUTH INDIAN BRONZES



राष्ट्रपति
भारत गणतंत्र
**PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF INDIA**



M E S S A G E

Madras Museum is a rich repository of south Indian bronzes which embody one of the highest achievements of Indian art. These sculptures are part of the world's artistic heritage and will always be prized as artefacts of man's creativity and of the divine spark in him. Chola bronzes are specially celebrated for their mastery in the portrayal of grace and dignity in the human form.

With a view to preserve the pristine purity of this ancient art, as Industries Minister, Madras, I started a school for sculpture at Mamallapuram and a school for bronze icons at Swamimalai. I am happy to note that these have preserved the ancient art for posterity.

It is gratifying that Madras Museum, in collaboration with the Development Commissioner of Handicrafts, Government of India, is holding a month long Exhibition of these icons from the 14th April, 1992. I am sure this initiative will enthuse those artists and sthapatis who continue the great tradition to this day, as well as those who will want to see the objects for their aesthetic fulfilment.

I send my best wishes for the success of the Exhibition.

R. Venkataraman

(R. VENKATARAMAN)

New Delhi,
April 13, 1992.



PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE



I am delighted to learn that Government Museum, Madras and the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts, Government of India are organising an exhibition which will include a display of South Indian Bronzes, demonstration by eminent craftsmen, cultural programmes, film shows and seminars highlighting various facets of Indian art and sculpture. I congratulate the organisers on their imaginative effort to present objects and artifacts of centuries gone by as part of a living tradition.

The priceless treasures housed in our Museums represent an important facet of our rich heritage. They are a visual delight, as well as a storehouse of knowledge. They take us back to our roots and tell the story of change, the story of human development.

I send my best wishes for the success of the exhibition.

P.V. Narasimha Rao

[P.V. Narasimha Rao]

New Delhi
April 8, 1992



RAJ BHAVAN
MADRAS-600 022

12.4.1992



MESSAGE

I am glad to learn that Madras Museum is organizing in collaboration with the Development Commissioner for Handicrafts, Government of India, a month-long exhibition at Madras from 14th April 1992.

The Museum which had a modest beginning in 1851 is now in possession of a very rich collection of South Indian bronzes. The fact that more than 1600 exquisite South Indian bronzes would be displayed in the exhibition, speaks of the voluminous collection of artefacts in the Museum, wide in its range and variety. I am also happy to note that various cultural programmes, demonstration by eminent craftsmen in icon making, film shows etc. would be held to commemorate the occasion.

I am sure the exhibition would benefit people from all walks of life. I extend my best wishes for the success of the exhibition.


(BHISHMA NARAIN SINGH)



अशोक गहलोत

वस्त्र राज्य मंत्री (स्वतंत्र प्रभार)

उद्योग भवन

नई दिल्ली-११० ०११

MINISTER OF STATE FOR TEXTILES
INDIA

NEW DELHI-110011

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the Government Museum, Madras is organising a month long exhibition on South Indian Bronzes at its premises from the 14th April, 1992 in collaboration with the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts), Ministry of Textiles. I am sure that this exhibition would give art lovers a rare opportunity to view the choicest bronze collections of the famous Government Museum, but would also be of great value to craftspersons and various organisations engaged in the development of the Handicrafts Industry.

I offer my warm greetings and best wishes for the success of the exhibition.


(ASHOK GEHLOT)



Dr. Avvai D. Natarajan
Secretary to Government

Tamil Development Culture Dept.
Madras

I am glad that an exhibition of South Indian bronzes, perhaps the first of its kind considering its size and range of exhibits has been organized now especially when a new awareness is sought to be created in protecting, preserving and propagating the glorious cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu.

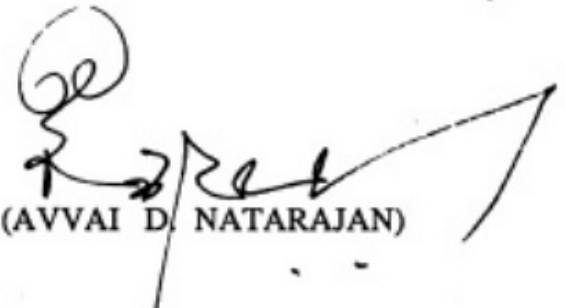
It is interesting to learn that more than 1,00,000 bronzes could be found scattered all over Tamil Nadu in temples; mutts and other remote places most of them depicting the ingenious craftsmanship of the talented artisans of medieval Tamil Nadu. Although the aesthetic excellence of the art, architecture and sculpture of India is famous all over the world, the exquisiteness of the bronzes of South India enjoys an exclusive renown being unparalleled in their creative artistry, exuberance and awe-inspiring grandeur.

Since the bronzes form part of our rich contribution to the world heritage of art, it has become our inescapable duty and responsibility to leave no stone unturned in attending to their proper upkeep.

It is a matter of immense satisfaction that the tradition of casting bronzes, originating, as it did, from the prehistoric period and developing through the chequered career of our cultural history, is still prevalent in pockets of Tamil Nadu and is sought to be improved with Government patronage, evidence for which could be seen in this exhibition.

Although the Agamas and Sastras of yore have formulated the basic methodology and other technical matters, the bronzes are found to represent the principles and precepts of art as enunciated in the scriptures like Thevaram and Divya Prabhandam hymns.

I am particularly happy that Thiru M. Raman, I.A.S., Director of Museums, is straining every nerve to make the exhibition a success which is being inaugurated by the Honourable Chief Minister, whose special concern and enthusiasm in the preservation of our ancient art and culture is well known.


(AVVAI D. NATARAJAN)

Madras Museum undoubtedly has the world's best collection of South Indian Bronzes. To enable the art lovers to enjoy and appreciate this great treasure, a month long exhibition has been organised. During this month long exposition, seminars, filmshows, cultural programmes and talks by the eminent persons are also being arranged. I hope the readers would find the articles in the souvenir interesting and useful.

M. RAMAN, I.A.S.
DIRECTOR OF MUSEUMS

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South Indian Bronzes*

Dr. C. Sivaramamurti

That south India is famous for her large collection of highly aesthetic bronzes is no exaggeration at all as is amply proved by the remains left in spite of the ravages of time that have had their own toll. Temples in south India teem with bronzes of the highest quality, and many of them are under worship. They gleam and glisten like gold and, with the garlands and sandal paste offered daily to them in ritual, present a picturesque episode of elaborate daily worship which is a feature in every temple in south India, a tradition that continues even today.

The images were intended to be taken out in procession not only around the ambulatory of the temple for the edification of the devotees assembled in the temple to witness the festival, but also would go out into the village, into every street by turn, stop almost at every door to bless every individual devotee. These are known as the *chalabera* or the moving images in contrast to the *sthirabera* or the fixed deities in the sanctum that cannot move and that have to be seen and worshipped on the spot in the cella. The *Sthirabera* were usually of stone though originally, nearly two thousand years ago, they were generally made of lighter material like wood. Sometimes they are very large ones made of stucco and with delicate plaster applied, and details of the figures brought out very carefully and coloured. They were very imposing indeed, but the usual norm for these fixed images in the cella was stone, and the moving ones were made of metal. In South India five metals were used, *Panchaloha* as the admixture was called, composed of brass, copper, silver, gold and tin.

From the earliest historical period the lost-wax method, *cire perdue* process as it was called, was well known in India. The earliest bronzes found at Mohenjo-daro are in this process. In the Deccan and in South India the same process was in vogue. The whole of the south was under the sway of the Satavahanas during the four centuries from the second century B. C. to about the end of the second century A. D. One of the finest bronzes of this period fashioned by a Satavahana Sculptor is the elephant with royal riders of the second century A. D., a tiny one, a miniature bronze now in the Kolhapur Museum, only 5 cms. high but exquisite in workmanship pre-supposing a great tradition that must have been there several centuries earlier. In the extreme south of India, in Adichanallur in Tirunelveli district, a female figurine, a mother goddess 7 cms. high, which can be dated to about 1000 B.C., was found and is now preserved in the Government Museum at Madras. The Satavahanas were great patrons of the Brahmanical and Buddhist religions, being very tolerant monarchs, and some of the finest

Satavahana bronzes of Buddha of medium size, though larger than the ones already described, ranging from 40 to 50 cms. have been found in different places in Andhra districts on the banks of the River Krishna. There are a few preserved in the Government Museum, Madras, and some have been found so far away as in Dong Duong in Malaya and even in Celebes island showing how there was a great demand for Satavahana sculptures of Buddha in metal in different lands of South East Asia. There was a close relationship between the Buddhist monks of the Krishna valley and those of Ceylon, and the famous image of Buddha in metal of the Amaravati school from Badulla now in the Colombo Museum is a magnificent example. During the excavations at Nagarjunakonda a princely figure was found with a bow belonging to the Ikshvaku period of the third century A.D.

The early Pallavas (like Sivakandavarman) who issued Prakrit charters were great patrons of art, and during their time metal work flourished. A fine example of workmanship of this period may be seen in the Avalokitesvara of about the fourth-fifth century A.D. from the Krishna valley, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum at London. The Pallavas were important rulers in the South, and we know from the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta that Vishnugopa stood up and gave battle to Samudragupta. They ruled from Kanchipuram. Kanchipuram was a great intellectual centre. There was an important university, *ghatika*, here, and the city is mentioned specially by the greatest Sanskrit grammarian Patanjali in the second century B.C. It was also a great cultural centre. No wonder that Sankara, who lived in the eighth century and was a contemporary of the Pallavas, gives the parable of molten copper poured into a mould assuming shape of the required figure as an illustration of perception in an early text of Indian philosophy. Sankara in his *Brahmasutrabhashya* (I,12) gives this parable in the words *mushanishiktadrutatamradipratimavat*, i.e. like images wrought of copper and other molten metal poured from a crucible into the mould. This is particularly interesting as Sankara was a contemporary of the later Pallavas when some of the finest bronzes of the Pallava period were being fashioned. In his *Upadesasahasri* (XIV,4) Sankara gives a verse as an example of the mind flowing into and taking the shape of objects comprehended by the senses: *mushasiktam yatha tamram tannibham jayate tatha, rupadin vyapnuvat chittam tannibham drisyate dhruvam*. This is again an elaboration of the molten metal poured from the crucible into the mould taking its shape. It is still a living art practised by metal workers known as *sthapatis* who prepare images by contemplating on hymns for the purpose known as

* Courtesy: Mrs. C. Sivaramamurthi and Marg Publications, Bombay.

3. *Buddha attended by Nagaraj Chauri bearers, Nagapattinam, Thanjavur, early chola, A. D. 1000. Collection: Government Museum, Egmore, Madras. The halo and the other symbolic additions to the figure often Buddha seating in the lotus seat show Brahmanisation of the earlier austere ellipses of the northern Buddha sculptures.*



*Ardhanarisvara,
Thiruvengadu,
Chola, eleventh century A. D.
Collection: Government Museum, Egmore, Madras.
The fusion of the feminine limits with the protuberant
breast with the male form is achieved from within the
mood of realisation of the unity of two opposing
strains. The modelling is a supreme example of the
bronze caster's highest skill.*

dhyanaslokas describing elaborately the forms of individual icons. The texts were carefully preserved and studied. The aesthetic part was contributed by the personal art experience and connoisseurship of each metal worker according to his capacity. Some of the finest bronzes have thus been fashioned and excite not only wonder but admiration.

From the early Chola inscriptions we know that several images were gifted by emperors to the temples for worship, and they are specially described as of two types, solid and hollow cast: *ghanamaga elundaruluviitta chandisvaraprasadadevar*. The God Chandisvaraprasadadeva cast solid and set up, and *ghanapollalaga chcheyda rishabham*, a bull cast hollow. The process itself known as *madhuchchhish-tavidhana*, lost-wax method, is described in the *Silpasas-tras*, and there is narration of it in a chapter on it in the *Manasara* in extremely corrupt text, and also in the *Vishnusamhita*. The clearest picture of metal casting is given by the Western Chalukyan king Somesvara (A. D. 1127-1138) in his encyclopaedic work *Abhilashitarthachinta-mani* or *Manasollasa*. It is here stated that the image has to be prepared with wax according to the *navatala* measurement, light yellow in colour and beautiful to behold, with proper disposition of the limbs including arms and weapons according to the iconographic texts. Long tubes, each with a flared mouth resembling the *kasa* flower, should be added on the back, at the shoulder, on the nape, or on the crown.

The figure then is coated with clay well prepared by adding to it charred husk, tiny bits of cotton and salt, all finely ground. The coating is repeated thrice every time after an interval of a couple of days and after that dried in the shade. The final coating is the most liberal. The mouth and the channel of the tube are left free. The weight and quantity of brass, copper, silver or gold is determined by the weight of the wax in the mould. The chosen metal is heated and, in the mould, which is also heated and from which the wax is melted and runs out, the molten metal is poured. The metal poured through the open mouth on the mould occupies the entire portion within the mouth and runs in a hot stream to completely occupy every bit of space reaching up to the mouth of the tube. The mould is allowed to cool, carefully broken, and the image in its perfection is realized. The tubes and superfluous projections are cut off. The image is finally finished and burnished. This in brief is described in the text and this is the process that has been followed for ages.

The *sthapati* is very particular about the iconometry and iconography. The various *sutras* like *maulisutra*, *nabhisutra*, *akshisutra*, *bhumisutra*, *kakshasutra* and others are all guidelines, and the height is determined by the *tala*. The *tala* measurement is based on the dimensions of the face from forehead to chin. There are also *sthanas* or dispositions like the *rju*, *ardharju* and various *hastas* or hand-gestures like *abhaya* (protection), *varada* (boon-conferring), *kajakamukha* (to carry an object), *kartarimukha* (like a pair of scissors to hold a weapon), *katyavalambita* (resting on hip), *lola* (free), *suchi* (threatening), *vismaya* (wonder), *vyakhyana* (exposi-

tion) and many others. Hands brought together as in *anjali* (obeissance) are also to be taken into account. In the case of Nataraja the hand across is *dandahasta* and the one carrying the fire is in *ardhachandra*.

Ornamentation, dress and the method of moulding the anatomical features of the figure itself have differed from time to time, helping us to fix the date of individual bronzes as Pallava, early Chola, late Chola, early Vijayanagara, late Vijayanagara, Nayaka and so forth. The *jatas* of Shiva assume various forms. The swirling *jatas* of Nataraja are well known. At the commencement of his dance, they are hanging down, but when he is in a momentum of quick movement, the *jatas* swirl round rising up and forming almost a net with the flowers dropping in between them on both sides with Ganga on one side and the crescent moon on the other. It is a glorious sight. Vrishabhantika, Dakshinamurti and other forms of Nataraja have the *jatas* bound as a heavy mass known as *jatabhara*. Bhairava's flaming hair is called *jvalakesa*. While Brahma, Siva, Sarasvati and Parvati were *jatamakuta* or crown composed of mass of hair, Vishnu, Sridevi, Bhudevi and others have the crown *Kiritamakuta*. For princesses like Sita, Satyabhama or Rukmini, there is the *dhammilla* or the dressed-up hair as a braid but for the goddesses it is the crown. Krishna himself does not wear the crown but has also the dressed-up hair. Rama as a king coronated wears the crown while his brothers have only dressed-up hair.

The clasp on the waist zone is usually adorned with the lion-head *kirtimukha* in the case of male deities, while a pair of *makara* heads decorates the slender waists of goddesses, except Durga who alone has a lion-head clasp. Goddesses are adorned also with a charming crossbelt of gold delicately wrought, known as *chchhannavira*. The *yajnopavita* or the sacred thread with a beautiful double-bell clasp adorns every god, and almost all goddesses also in the earlier periods. It is almost a flat band that runs from the left shoulder below the right arm and rests on the waist. It becomes more and more sinuous as the centuries pass and also develops several strands till finally in the Vijayanagara period the strands become numerous. In the case of Vishnu, the *srivatsa* mark is more symbolic in the Pallava period till slowly it becomes a seated feminine figure in early Chola somewhat triangular in shape, and finally in the Vijayanagara period it is just a triangle. In the case of Bhairava, the *yajnopavita* is a very long one composed either of skulls or a number of bells. The shoulder tassel appears in the early Chola period to the right and has a banyan-shaped pendant. It also develops to the left from the late Chola period onwards.

The armlets and anklets also have their change during the centuries which help us to identify the image according to its correct dating. The *siraschakra* which is a lotus-like decoration at the back of the head changes again during the centuries. The loops and the waist zone, which are in the earliest Pallava period semi-circular, slowly taper down, and during the centuries undergo transformation of form. The

1. Vishapaharana,
Kilappuddanur.
Pallava period, 8th century A. D.
Collection: Government Museum, Egmore, Madras.



2. Natesa,
Kuram, Chingleput District,
Pallava, eighth century A. D.
Collection: Government Museum, Egmore, Madras.
This is a fine example of Natesa dancing in the
Urdhvajanu pose, probably the only representation of
Natesa in this pose in metal.

side tassels also change similarly, one straight tassel at the earliest stage gets doubled and finally even trebled in the Vijayanagara period. The circular decoration on the buttocks known as *prishtha chakra* is unknown in earlier sculptures and appears only in the Vijayanagara period. The *kuchabandha* or the breast-band is usually for the senior consort of the deity like Sridevi of Vishnu.

The attributes also develop, with changes during the centuries. The discus which is held on edge in the Pallava period is at 45 degrees angle diagonally held in the Chola period and is flat during the Vijayanagara days. The flames that develop slowly in the late Pallava period become more prominent in Chola and develop tassels also on the Vijayanagara period. The natural noose and axe in the Pallava and early Chola periods become almost unrecognizable in the Vijayanagara period. The *sula* of Siva, which has a longer middle prong and almost semi-circular side prongs in Pallava images, loses the height of the middle prong in the Chola period, changes in form and goes on changing thereafter. Similarly the club *gada* of Vishnu also has its own change of form during the centuries.

As the temples of the Pallavas were comparatively small and *gopuras* also were very small, the bronzes of this period are miniatures but exquisitely wrought. Of these probably the most magnificent is the Tripurantaka with a single pair of arms, one of the eight forms recognized in the *silpa* text, now in the Gautam Sarabhai collection at Ahmedabad. A Vishvapaharana of the eighth-ninth century from Kilapuduranur, now in the Government Museum at Madras, is a unique one with the *yajnopavita* or the sacred thread running over the right arm, a special characteristic of Pallava art, and is probably the only known image of that form in metal anywhere in the world. Equally fortunate is the Madras Museum in possessing another Pallava image of Nataraja, a unique one again in a special dance pose known as *urdhvajanu*. This image from kuram is the only one of its kind in metal known. Another Pallava image of about the same date is from the temple at Nallur, with the foot raised a little from *Chatura* to form the *urdhvajanu*. This is multi-armed, a rare feature in south Indian bronzes; it has eight hands, the snake having five hoods encircling one of them. This description of the snake is given by one of the four famous Saiva devotees (Nalvar) Tirujnanasambandar. In this the dwarf crushed under the foot actually does not feel crushed, is sitting up with a pride and a cheerful face facing the spectator, a rare, unusual feature. The *jatamakuta* of Siva, as is usual in Pallava bronzes, is very elaborately worked, and the arch of flame is also very beautifully fashioned. The *jatas* on the back and the *siraschakra* are all characteristic of these several Pallava metal images.

An image of Vishnu only 21 cm. high but exquisite with the *yajnopavita* over the right arm, formerly in the N. M. Sastri collection and now in the National Museum, is a gem of a Pallava image. The *sri-vatsa* mark on the chest is very prominent, and it is typical in every way of Pallava workmanship. In the Madras Museum itself there is another with

its locality unknown, 25 cm. high with a small lotus flower in the lower right hand in *abhaya* with the *gada* in the lower left hand and with all the characteristics of Pallava images. The *yajnopavita* composed of pearls is most beautifully wrought. In the Indian Museum at Calcutta is a seated Vishnu, also Pallava, the *pitha* unfortunately badly mutilated, the *yajnopavita* composed of pearls running over the right arm, and in every other way conforming to the Pallava norm. The finest miniature Vishnu anywhere in the world, of the Pallava period of the eighth century, is probably the one in the Madras Government Museum, only 21 cm. high the *yajnopavita* running over the right arm, the face in a beatific smile with a rare charm, and a remarkably prominent *sri-vatsa* mark on the chest.

Among the Buddhist images from Nagapattinam is a gold gilt Maitreya, also Pallava, with slight Chalukyan touches. It has *mukta-yajnopavita* running over the right arm, the anklet beautifully wrought with loops at intervals that add magnificence to it, a crown exquisitely carved, and it has all other features that proclaim it Pallava. We cannot miss Simhanada from the group of Buddhist bronzes from Nagapattinam, which is also of the same date and is a Pallava masterpiece showing the deity seated almost in *maharajalila* pose, except that the right hand is not extended to rest on the right knee.

In the temple at Singanallur is one of the most outstanding Pallava images of Trivikrama, which is a fairly large one, about 45 cm., pulling out an arrow from the quiver to use his bow with his left leg raised up and with its eight arms provided with various attributes, the face itself presenting the most divine countenance. Among the great masterpieces of Pallava sculptures should be mentioned a recently discovered bronze from near Vadakkalattur in Thanjavur district, which presents Siva as Kalyanasundara, the most exquisite that has so far been found anywhere, so natural and so full of life. Yet the most complete figure of Kalyanasundara representing the south Indian tradition as early as of the Chola period, Vishnu and Lakshmi giving away Parvati in marriage to Siva, is from Tiruvengadu, now in the Thanjavur Art Gallery, a fine early Chola assemblage of four images, the only one of its kind, showing the entire group of the bride and bridegroom and the givers-away. The only one lacking here is Brahma seated as officiating priest which was present in the more complete beautiful early Chola Kalyanasundara group from Koneirajapuram temple, that was broken up years ago, the images finding their way to different collections.

Of the transitional period from Pallava to Chola is Somaskanda from Tiruvalangadu, who carries strangely enough in the lower right and left hands *kapala* (a skull cap) and *sula* (trident), which is an uncommon feature in Somaskanda. Baby Skanda is unfortunately missing. It is one of the treasures among miniature bronzes, a small one only 28 cm. high, now in the Madras Government Museum. A very early tenth-century image of Krishna on Kaliya, easily the best of its kind, was originally in the N. Y. Sastri collection and now

a treasure in the National Museum, New Delhi. To the Pallava-Chola transition belongs also the charming image of Somaskanda from Sorakkudi. The Thanjavur Art Gallery has the most beautiful early Chola Sukhasanamurti of the ninth-tenth century A. D. from Kilayur that shows late Pallava features as well. The axe and the deer are very characteristic of the delicate workmanship of the early period that characterise the image.

The Chola period was one of the most glorious in south Indian history. In about A. D. 850 Vijayalaya founded a small kingdom that was built up by his successors Aditya, Parantaka, Sundara Chola and others. Gandaraditya, son of Parantaka, a pious king who covered the shrine of Nataraja in Chidambaram with Gold, died on the battlefield, and his wife Sembianmadevi, the greatest queen in Chola history, who was widowed at a young age, not only built several temples but also got prepared a number of important bronzes. It is Raja Raja, son of Sundara Chola, his son Rajendra Chola and his grandson Kulottunga that brought the greatest glory to the Chola empire. The magnificent bronzes in the Colombo Museum representing the Tamil saints Appar, Sundarar, Tirugnanasambandar, and Manikkavachakar, Nataraja, Sivakamasundari, Vrishabhavahanamurti and Surya are also great masterpieces of Chola workmanship fashioned by Ceylonese craftsmen inspired by the noblest art of the time in the mainland. That explains the great affinities. The recently discovered bronzes including Nataraja, Sivakamasundari, Ganesa and Karaikkalammai, now in the Polonnaruwa Museum, are also masterpieces.

The inscription of Raja Raja mentions a large number of well-fashioned titanic bronzes presented by him to the Brihadisvara temple. Nataraja with *prabha* and *Sivakamasundari*, still preserved in the temple, are mentioned in detail in the inscription. The Tripurantaka with his foot resting on Apasmara is another notable bronze presented by Raja Raja to the same temple.

But the earlier phase of Chola art is probably unrivalled for sheer delicacy of treatment and aesthetic charm. The large-sized Vishnu from Paruttiyur is of the ninth-tenth century A.D. and is one of the earliest bronzes of the Chola period. The National Museum can well be proud of a unique bronze, aesthetically also of the highest order, Nataraja in *Chatura* pose from Tiruvarangulam, Parvati as a bride, broken from a Kalyanasundara group, of about A. D. 1000, from the temple at Koncirajapuram and now in the Gautam Sarabhai collection, must be seen personally to admire its delicate workmanship. The fabric composing her lower garment has patterns lovely to behold, the braid is dressed in a singularly charming way and a golden cross band is wrought delicately on her torso. Nataraja from Tiruvalangadu which has lost its *prabha* and the swirling *jatas* is however the best known and most important among the Nataraja images in the Madras Museum, which has been made world famous by Coomaraswamy. Among titanic bronzes like Somaskanda presented by Rajendra to the

temple of Gangaikondacholapuram there is a Devasenapati, Skanda as commander-in-chief of the army of the gods, carrying the cock, shield, and thunderbolt, but the sword is absent. The early Chola Nataraja from Velankanni, which has a *prabha* intact, has swirling *jatas* and the upper garment tied around the stomach and allowed to flow and swirl along in his dance, is another great masterpiece. One moment of dance coinciding with the same moment of a pat of the drum and the clang of the cymbals by Sivaganas flanking the dancing lord from Melaperumballam, now in the Madras Museum, is a magnificent bronze. This is in the tradition of the Chidambaram type of Nataraja. Undoubtedly the best Ardhanarisvara, the hermaphrodite form of Siva, balancing so beautifully the two arms of Siva to the right and the single one of Parvati to the left and standing with the weight of the body on the left leg, right lower hand in an attitude of resting on the hump of the bull, recovered from Tiruvenkadu, is the finest of its kind and is in the Madras Government Museum. Parvati in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, which should be assigned to about the tenth century A. D. is indeed a never-to-be-forgotten image of the goddess. The Vadakkupanayur Rama group, with Sita like Sri herself in her charm, *Sita srir iva rupini* as Valmiki would describe her, an exquisite beauty and a worthy consort of the princely figure of Rama — almost life size, is the pride of possession of the Madras Museum. The Gajantaka image of Siva of the eleventh century from Veluvar is the only one of its kind and remarkable one. In Tiruvalangadu temple is a unique early Chola image of Siva dancing with foot raised up in the *urdhvataṇḍava* or *lalatatilaka* pose.

A Vinadhara of about eleventh century A.D. in the Musée Guimet, Paris, is another of those very lovely figures in metal of the early Pallava period. Probably the loveliest early Chola image is Devi, Uma and Skanda of the Somaskanda group of the ninth-tenth century A. D. from Palavanisvaram in Thanjavur district.

Early Chola art has given the finest Ganesa with a natural elephant head and trunk. This is of the tenth century from Velankanni and is a masterpiece. Chandikesvara has probably the finest early Chola representation dateable in about A. D. 1000, now in the Madras Government Museum. Kali of about A. D. 1000 from Senniyanvidudi in the Madras Museum helps us by the early Chola inscription on its pedestal to check the date that can be easily confirmed by the workmanship which proclaims consonance with both the epigraphy and the aesthetic performance of the early Chola sculptor. Eight-armed Mahishamardini from Turaikkadu is another large figure of about A. D. 1000 in the Madras Museum. There are no greater beautiful images of Siva and Parvati of the early Chola phase than the Vrishabhantika and Devi, titanic figures with a pleasing green patina on them, preserved in the Thanjavur Art Gallery. No account of early Chola art would be complete without a reference to the magnificent Buddha image, with a Nagaraja on either side in attendance, a radiating halo behind his head, seated on an

elaborate seat with back rest, the unconventional elegant Bo tree and the umbrella above the flaming head of Buddha, easily the best from the treasure trove find from Nagapattinam.

There are two early Chera images of Vishnu of the ninth century with characteristic Pallava features with a slight Chalukyan admixture in the Trivandrum Museum.

Early Pandyan art is fairly represented by a unique image of Nataraja in the Madras Museum which can be dated to the eleventh century. The raised leg is reversed as usual in Pandyan figures of the dancing Lord. This image from Poruppumettupatti is indeed an inspiring one which shows a different radiation of the dance of Siva.

A beautiful miniature bronze of Yasoda Krishna of the Chola-Vijayanagara transition of the thirteenth century from Togur, now in the Madras Museum, is a sculptor's dream realised. The Annapurna of twelfth century A. D. standing gracefully with a ladle in her hand for offering food, her braid most beautifully done, is a rare piece which is in the Gautam Sarabhai collection. The best Nataraja of the last phase of Chola art which has several titanic figures is probably in Amsterdam, and it is almost without a peer.

The Vijayanagara emperor Krishnadeva Raya was himself a great poet in both Sanskrit and Telugu and a great patron of art as well. The group of portrait status of Krishnadeva Raya with his queens Tirumalamba and Chinadevi in the Tirupati temple is almost life-size and is a wonder of

Vijayanagara workmanship. In spite of stylization that had set in by the end of the Chola period, these portraits have a vigour that cannot be gainsaid. Among the Vijayanagara pieces, a unique Heramba Ganapati from Nagapattinam belonging to the fifteenth century is of great iconographic importance. Ganesa has five heads and ten arms and rides a lion. It is a peculiar image. That the vigour of early work still survived in Vijayanagara art can be seen in the Dipalakshmi of the seventeenth century, a large typical piece from Madurai now in the Temple Museum. The image of Parvati from Jambavanodi, so slender, so tall and so imposing is, indeed, for its age, the seventeenth century, a really worthy creation of the *sthapati* of the age. This is now in the National Museum, New Delhi. The sculptor in metal like the stone-carver was equally at home in depicting icons according to *dhyanaslokas*. He was also an adept in portrait sculpture, and the Chola period can boast of the famous Kulottunga image that is now lost. The Vijayanagara period has several portraits like the Krishnadeva Raya group at Tirupati, Achyuta Raya, and several other Nayaka kings and their queens some of whose exquisite portraits of the seventeenth century are found in Tiruvidamarudur temple, recently made known to the world by the Department of Archaeology, Madras.

Bronze-casting is an art that is still practised and even today sthapatis properly guided are able to produce lovely figures that can claim aesthetic charm and iconographic perfection.

Some Rare and Retrieved South Indian Bronzes

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"The Bronzes of the South embody one of the highest achievements of Indian Art. They are part of the World's Heritage, and will be prized so long as civilization endures. Chola Bronzes in particular are celebrated for their mastery in portraying the grace of the human figure enlivened by spiritual benignity. Rarely has sculptures achieved a better combination of beauty and power¹".

Bronze is an alloy of copper, tin and lead. A unique bronze figure of Mother Goddess from Adichanallur (Madras Museum) and a bronze plate, very solid, having a lotus centre spread, from Nilgiris in the iron age burial contexts are the earliest specimens from far south. In the Megalithic urn fields, vessels with lids frequently decorated figures of rams, cocks, buffaloes and birds and in one instance dogs too appear. Bells of bronze with iron tongue were common in Peninsular Indian Megaliths.

Next in point of time is a solid cast bronze image of seated Buddha in *dhyanamudra*, apart from the limestone *Buddhapada* (*Pada Sanghati*), with auspicious symbols and stucco figures from the Pallavaneswaram² site at Kaveripattinam, clearly heralds the beginning of ritualistic use of cult objects of metal in Tamil Nadu undoubtedly after the earliest Ikshvaku-Pre SimhaVishnu Pallava craftsmen of Andhrapatha, their centres being Amaravati-Buddham and Nagarjunakonda.

(A) Techniques of Bronze Casting:

Karmara or the metal worker was an artisan of great importance in the historical period. There were *sthapati* guilds. *Manasara* has a chapter on bronze technique. A clear data on the casting of metal images is provided in the first *Prakarana* of the *Abhilashitartha chintamani*³ (the wish fulfilling gem) or *Manasollasa* by the Chalukyan king Somesvara-I (1127-1138). This is a living art even today and more prolific production was in the south – the centres are Kumbakonam, Tanjore, Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu) Chebrolu-Tenali, Tirupati (A. P.), Sivapuram and Kolar (Karnataka) etc.

This process is described as *Madhuchchishta vidhanam*. This is known in French as *Cire Perdue*, lost-wax mode, a method employed by Chinese and Greeks as well. The object was modelled in wax then firmly coated with ant-hill clay all over. When heated, the wax melted out leaving a mould behind into which liquid metal was poured to cast a solid image (*Sarvatoghana*)⁴.

In case of a hollow image, the subject is modelled in clay, the core was coated with wax layer and the wax is covered again with negative of clay. The sandwiched wax is drained

out by heating and molten metal was allowed to form the sheet of image. In both the cases, finishing is given, by chiselling the extraneous matter ground smooth. The *cire perdue* is called the master-technique and after a single object is cast, the mould is destroyed and hence no two South Indian images are alike.

(B) Tamil Pallava Bronzes:

(6th to early 9th century A.D.)

There is no doubt in the fact that metal images were popular in the early Pallava period. There is overwhelming domination of *brahmanical* images, though metal images are rarely used as *Dhruvaberas*, are mostly for *Utsava*, *Snapanam* and *bali* images. Nagapattinam remained a mint centre of metal images not only Buddhism, but also of the other religious cults – Brahmanical and Jaina. We shall cite here some outstanding examples among the South Indian bronzes.

The four-handed Natesa from Kuram in *urdhvajanu* pose, left leg raising, left upper hand holding a snake, not a flame; *Vishvapaharanamurti* – Siva swallowing *Kalakuta visha* – the typical *yajnopavita* on the right arm; the *Tripurantaka*, a rare two-handed image with *jata* and the anklets; hands carrying bow and arrow in Gautam Sarabhai collection are noteworthy Pallava specimens. The Perunthottam (near Kaveripattinam) bronzes of the time of Rajasimha (700-730 A. D.) are also unique. These small (all 9" and below) four Vishnu images in *Sthanaka Samabhanga* pose – conical *kirita*s, *Siraschakra*, ear-rings, *kanthis* (necklace), *yajnopavita* with pearls and central knots, long and broad extending over the right fore arm displayed a feature solely Pallavan.

(C) Pallava-Chola Transition (late 9th and 10th century A. D.)

The little bronze of Somaskanda from Tiruvalangadu is a late Pallava (Nandivarman's time) or better say transitory period. The Siva here carries a *sula* and *kapala*. Other notable images of the Pallava-Chola transition (10th century A. D.) are the *Vishvapaharana* from Kilappudanur, *Vinadhara* from Tanjore. Art gallery, Kiratamurti, Natesa, etc. in the Bank of Italy, Rome and Natesa from Nallur.

We have several icons of Nataraja with *chatura*, *lalita*, etc., as well as those forms of Siva shown dancing with more than two pairs of arms (*nrttamurtis*). But these motifs are entirely different from the great *ananda Tandava* images that were cast and installed, more specifically the one at the

Tilla of Chidambaram. This form as painted art by (Late) B. G. L. Swamy³ evolved independently as an integral part of the *Pratyabhigna* philosophy which has origins in Kashmir mid 9th century A. D. The earliest *anada Tandava* images in metal appear therefor from end of 9th and early 10th century A. D. onwards installed in the Temples in South India. Their incorporation in temples, more pronouncedly, from the times of Raja-Raja-I, the greatest Chola emperor. Chidambaram or Tilla at Perumbarrappuliyar became a seat of Kashmir Saivism and Nataraja enjoys the full status of a *mulabera* within the sanctum here (*Nataraja Sthana*).

We shall narrate here in brief some of the outstanding metal icons from Tamil Nadu of the Chola period.

(D) Imperial Chola Bronzes:

This period heralds⁶ "the ritual consolidation and artistic standardization". Almost every temple had its set of bronze images of the Gods enshrines, the *vyaktarupa* in case the sanctum had *linga* (*avyaktarupa*). Chola rulers took pride in donating *utsavamurtis* and perpetual arrangements for *tirumanjanam* (*nitya-abhisheka*), lighting of lamp (*nitya-dipa*) and food offering (*nitya-naivedya*). In every temple, a *Nataraja mandapa* is added. Temple building and ritual arts initiated by Aditya (870-907 A. D.) were continued by Parantaka I, elaborated and systematized by the great Raja Raja-I (985-1014 A. D.), the builder of the Brihadisvara temple. He caused the *Adavallan* (the Master dancer in Tamil), a sublime creation in the domain of universal arts, nearly of one metre high and a smaller half metre specimen to the great temple. The Tanjore and Tiruchirapalli regions yield Chola bronzes of a metropolitan style.

Having detailed some of the historical bronzes of early medieval South India, I would like to apprise the scholars here how some of these metal objects of this great civilization are removed from their historical and monumental set up and smuggled out of the country of origin. Before that I shall narrate very briefly the great efforts of the World bodies like UNESCO, INTERPOLE the National Governments, other investigating agencies and judiciaries in retrieving the cultural properties to their places of origin.

(E) Indian Scene:

Like other Asian and African countries, India suffered from the loss of a considerable part of its movable cultural properties prior to 1947. The promulgation of Antiquities Export Control Act, 1947 succeeded to some extent in clogging the supply channels of Indian antiquities and art objects to the art market of the Western countries. However, the sheer immensity of cultural property, inadequate awareness about the antiquarian value at the grass root level coupled with inadequacies in the Antiquities Export Control Act, 1947 on the one hand and the phenomenal increase in the demand for Indian antiquities in the International art market, the fabulous price offered for these objects, provided an allurements to the smugglers to resort to clandestine

practices and illicit export of Indian antiquities and art objects. The UNESCO Convention urged each country to protect its own cultural patrimony as well as to join in an international effort to carry out concrete measures including control of exports, imports and international trade in endangered materials. In pursuance of this Convention, the Government of India promulgated the Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972 which came into force w.e.f. 5.4.1976. The salient aspects of this Act are to preserve and protect priceless and irreplaceable antiquities and art objects which form the nucleus of the glorious cultural heritage of India. Its object is also to prevent and stop the illegal export of antiquities and art objects outside the country and to make all efforts to bring back any antiquities or art objects illegally exported out of the country.

(F) Retrieval of Lost Cultural Properties: Role of UNESCO:

UNESCO has been showing its deep concern on the Protection of Cultural Properties of member States and incessantly endeavouring to safeguard the works of art, antiques and archaeological objects of Nationals from theft, clandestine excavations and illicit export. National regulations concerning the safeguarding of Cultural Properties existed. But these National laws governing protection of movable Cultural Properties are little known and adequate dissemination of knowledge and dialogue has become essential. Matters concerning the Cultural Heritage, Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (in fact trading in antiquities of a Nation) should be above the control of the Governments of the day. Democratic Nations in particular, should be bridled more tightly with conventions and legislations by UNESCO so that cultural properties of the Mankind are passed on to future generations intact.

The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the period 1988-1997 as World Decade of Cultural development. Apart from promoting global awareness for preserving and propagating the Cultural Heritage, restitution of Cultural Properties has been widely stressed.

The recommendations made by UNESCO⁷ on 19th Nov., 1964 (Paris) on "The Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Export, Import and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property" have been adopted as Convention on 14th November, 1970 at the 16th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO (Paris) which came to force on 24th April, 1972. Each State party to the Convention has to establish regulations and necessary implementation measures: (a) to Prevent Museums within their territories from acquiring Cultural property which has been illegally exported; (b) to Prohibit the import of cultural property stolen from a Museum or Public Institution after the entry into force of the Convention; (c) at the request of the State of origin, to recover and return any such cultural property stolen and imported. As on August, 1988, 71 States⁸ were parties who

PL. 1 (a) : Sivapuram, Tanjore Dt.,
(Tamil Nadu),
Nataraja,
Frontal View



(b) : Sivapuram Nataraja
Rear view

ratified or accepted or accessioned to this Convention out of 162-National members of UNESCO. India has ratified this convention on 24th Jan. 1977.

I. Sivapuram Nataraja: (PL I A and B)

Sivapuram is a village 10 Km. east of Kumbakonam, in Tanjore district. It is noted for the temple of Sivagurunathaswami. The famous bronze image of Nataraja unearthed from this Temple premises, proved to be a unique early Chola bronze datable to about the last quarter of the 10th century A. D. on stylistic grounds. Weighing 184 Kgs. and measuring 137 cms. in height, this dancing Siva idol of exquisite workmanship displays the usual *Bhujangatrasita* or *Ananda Tandava* mode of dance. From the fact that its *prabha* is apsidal in form rather than elliptical or circular as in classical Chola bronzes and that there are three pronged flames along the fringe of the tube-like solid arch, it is regarded as a rare early example of Nataraja. Another most notable aspect is the slender body of the Lord, the vertically placed third eye the ten braids of floating hair (*Jatas*), with ten *Pumalais* in between, the floating sash touches the *prabha* indicating the speed of dance. P. R. Srinivasan⁹ says "it is earlier than Natesa from Velanganni and Tiruvalangadu and of the big temple of Tanjore". J. C. Harle¹⁰ considers this image along with Tandanlottam and Vadakkalathur ones among the early Chola specimens. P. R. Srinivasan dated this image to early 10th century A. D. while Doughlass Barret¹¹ assigned 950 A. D. and wrote that "it is one of the earliest Natarajas in bronze to have survived".

This Nataraja idol was among the six idols found in 1951 while digging a field. The others are Somaskanda, Sivakami, Gauriamman, Jñanasambandar and Vinayaka. Under the Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878, the Collector, Thanjavur district handed over the idols to the temple authorities of Sivagurunathaswamy temple which were duly received by them in 1953¹².

The idols, being under the earth for a very long time, were in a deteriorated condition and they were entrusted to one Ramaswamy Sthapati of Devi Silpasala in 1954 for repair and restoration. The idols were with him till 1956. During this period of five of the idols including the Nataraja were replaced by fake ones and the originals changed hands. They came into the possession of one Mr. Lance Dane, an executive of an advertising company, Bombay. Doughlass Barret of the British Museum visited India in 1964 and saw the Nataraja image in the possession of Mr. Lance Dane. Barret mentioned that the Nataraja idol formerly in the Sivapuram temple was in a private collection in Bombay and with deep concern he says "The equally important Somaskanda and Ganesa from the same find are now, like the Nataraja, represented in the temple by modern copies. It is imperative that the present whereabouts of these images, vital for the history of Early Chola bronze - casting should be established¹³".

The Government of Tamil Nadu then ordered an enquiry

in 1967 to find out if the published report was correct. The case was referred to the Crime Branch, CID Tamil Nadu, for investigation. At the instance of Tamil Nadu Government, the Crime Branch took up the investigation in 1969. After the enquiry was over, the Director, Government Museum, Madras, declared the existing idols in the temple to be fake and not original. It was established beyond doubt that a replica was prepared and sent to the temple, and the genuine one sold at Rs. 5,000/- only. When it changed hand, the image costed Rs. 17,000/- and this time the buyer was an executive of a foreign company in Madras. The Company executive had it in his possession till 1964 when it was exchanged for fifty-nine miniature bronze images plus Rs. 25,000/-. In 1968, the last mentioned buyer sold it for Rs. 5,00,000/-; thereafter in 1969 it was bought by a buyer at a price of Rs. 5,75,000/- through a middleman. It was learnt in 1970 that the Sivapuram Nataraja had reached the U.S.A.

After changing several hands, the Nataraja idol reached New York in 1969 from the Palam Airport, Delhi on a foreign airlines via London. One Mr. Ben Heller, cleared it from the customs and subsequently sold it to Mr. Norton Simon, of Los Angeles for one million dollars in 1973. After some time Norton Simon sent the idol to the British Museum, London for repairs and Scotland Yard impounded it as stolen property.

Government of India filed court cases in U.K. in 1974 and shortly after in U.S.A. for the restitution of this property. Documentary evidence, photographs, copy of F.I.R. and publication of Dr. Barret, etc., were produced as evidence of ownership which was established in the court but Norton Simon pleaded innocent purchase.

After protracted litigation the matter was ultimately settled out of court with Norton Simon Foundation and according to the agreement the idol of Nataraja would remain with Norton Simon Foundation on loan from Government of India for a period of ten years commencing from 6.5.76 and the foundation would return the idol at the end of ten years.

The Director General, Archaeological Survey of India was sent for bringing back the idol and it was thoroughly examined by him as well as by International Experts such as Dr. Stella Kramrisch and Elizabeth Rosen on 5.5.86 and was taken over on the same day in the presence of officials of Indian Embassy and representatives of Norton Simon Foundation. The Nataraja idol reached India on 8.5.86 and on 15.5.86 it was handed over to the representatives of Tamil Nadu Government at Madras.

II. Bronze Nataraja from Pathur (Thanjavur District) (PL 2)

Some time between September and October, 1976, one Mr. Rama Murthy of Pathur village digging for sand near Arulthiru Viswanathaswamy Temple discovered, a 32" solid bronze statue along with eight other bronze images and *Puja* articles. Afterwards nothing was heard about them till 9

PL. 2 : Pathur, Tanjore Dt. (Tamil Nadu)
Nataraja



PL. 3 : Thiruvilakkudi, Tanjavur Dt.
(Tamil Nadu)
Bronze Nataraja

months and on 15th July, 1977, the Bronze Nataraja surfaced mysteriously in England and widely reported. The Tamil Nadu Government immediately swung into action by alerting Scotland Yard, but it was not till 1982 that the police could impound the statue from the British Museum where it had been delivered for cleaning.

Iconography:

This was an important idol and a focal point of worship at the temple which was founded in about 1175 A. D. The image is as usual a solid cast one, and depicts Nataraja in *ananda tandava*, four-handed, right foot upon the dwarf and resembles the known examples from Kumbakonam¹⁴ (1150 A. D.), Karuntattangudi and Kodumudi¹⁵ dated to the end of 10th century A. D. The image stands on circular lotus pedestal over a square three-tiered base. The flowing *jatas*, five on each side are interspersed by *pumalas* in between touching the bold *Prabha mandala*. The thick sturdy *Prabha* is perfectly circular falling into three well defined circles issued from the mouth of huge *makaras* at either ends touching the base. Two flames on the halo; and a flame in the right palm and perhaps the Ganga on the loop of the *Jatas* on the upper right, as in Gudimallam, (PL) are missing. These got perhaps damaged while digging from the pit.

Importance of the Case

This case was regarded as a landmark and never before such a legal battle was made on retrieval of stolen cultural property; before the Queen's Bench of the London High Court. The Bumper Development Corporation pleaded that it was an innocent purchaser who in good faith purchased it on 10.6.1982 from Julian Sherrier, a London art dealer for £2,50,000 and pleaded that it was not the stolen idol from Pathur village. The accused was apprehended in India and he along with other witnesses identified the statue in London. Forensic experts provided evidence of its genuineness. Documentary evidence was also produced by Tamil Nadu Government.

On 17.2.88 London High Court delivered the judgement in favour of India but appeal was preferred by the Bumper Development Corporation in the Royal Court of Justice at London. Ultimately, India won the case as the appeal preferred by the Bumper Corporation was dismissed as per the judgement delivered by the Court on 13.2.91. The idols were brought by Indian High Commissioner, London and handed over to the Tamil Nadu Government on 9.8.91 at Madras.

The Judgement created a history of all sorts as the earlier legal battles for retrieval of lost National antiquities ended in out of Court settlements (Supra No. I). In particular, Mr. Adrian Hamilton and Bhaskar Ghorpade Council for plaintiffs brought to the fore a "moral dimension" to the issue involved as juristic entity "Under well-established legal convention of Hindu Laws the Hindu Temples were entitled to protection in English Courts". In this case Union of India was the first claimant; State of Tamil Nadu second claimant;

Thiru Sadagopan, the first person of the temple – third claimant; the fourth claimant was the temple itself and the fifth claimant was the Presiding deity, the Sivalingam.

As head of the Commonwealth, the Queen is concerned with believers in many faiths, with many conceptions of God. Moreover, there is no public policy against recognising juristic entities created by the pious of any faith... The moral dimension has (thus to be considered not in the context of the earlier times when developed countries regarded themselves as entitled to the pillage of artefacts of undeveloped countries¹⁶.

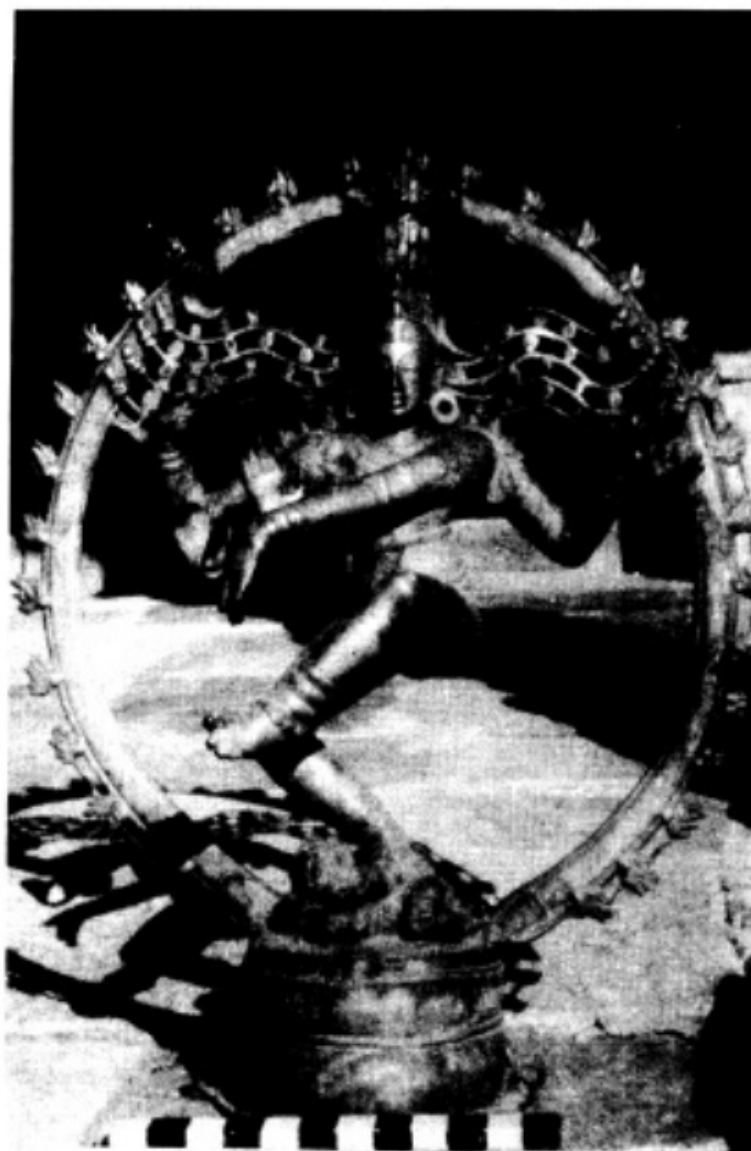
To this, the defendant have submitted that although the Queen is the highest power in the United Kingdom, "she rules under God. It would be contrary to public policy for the High Court to purport to entertain jurisdiction over God – whether he be the Almighty God, the Supreme Being, or a manifestation of God in the form of a consecrated idol like the Nataraja being a deity under Indian Law. While both the parties are agreed on the religious significance of Nataraja as a Hindu deity, the question arises as to whether its juristic entity survives its removal from a temple and "kidnapping of its physical entity". What does justice demand in a case like this?

The Bumper Development Corporation is not prepared to concede and agreed that a temple without its idol can have a juristic entity. Moreover, the Nataraja, once out of its temple, can no longer be an object of deification. The learned Judge Mr. Justice Jan Kennedy, J. observed "it may be that claims akin to that in this case could be made which could be pursued outside the jurisdiction of the Union of India. Many will fail, but some will succeed, particularly if the criminal character of their taking could be proved. *I am sure that the real energy behind the present claim is that of the government of the Union which wants to stop and if possible reverse, the outward flow of a precious part of the nation's cultural heritage*". He further observed, "But I am satisfied that the pious intention of the 12th century notable, who gave the land and built the Pathur temple, remains in being and is, personified by the temple itself, a juristic entity which has a title to the Nataraja superior to that of the defendant".

The three bench judgement unanimously dismissed the Bumper Development Corporation's appeal and delivered a 163-page (Feb. 13, 1991) reviewing extensively scientific, and eye-witness evidences thus ending a nine year legal battle¹⁷. Thus, the Pathur Nataraja case marks the first time that the Almighty has approached a British Court for justice. And indeed the Lord was lucky that His image was recovered on British soil as English law does not give the buyer of stolen property any title to it¹⁸.

III. Bronze Nataraja from Tiruvilakkudi, Tanjavur District Retrieved from Kimbell Art Museum

This bronze was stolen from the Isvara temple called Arulmigu Manavalesvara Swami, Tiruvilakkudi on the night of 20.2.1978. The image weighed 100Kg. its height was 105



PL. 4 : Gudimallam, Chittur Dt. (A. P.)
Nataraja

cms. (the image proper 76 cm high while the *adhishthana* is 29 cm.). The Executive Officer of the Temple lodged a complaint on 21.2.1978, with the local police (Kuttalam) who after investigation declared undetectable on 1.4.1979.

Importance of the Image (PL. 3)

The image appears to be a distinct example of Nataraja of an early Chola period, like the one from Chidambaresvara temple, Vadakkalattur¹⁹. It is an *Utsavamurti* set over a flat rectangular pedestal of two tiers. The face is somewhat squarish and the fan-like ends of the forehead bands (*mukhapatti*) extend sidereally. The flat ribbons projecting out from the central part of the *Ushnisha*, the matted locks of hair spread out on the rear extending sideways too on the shoulder right upto the arms. The *Kanthika* the *bahurvalayas*, the *mekhalas* around the waist are tied with a chain like drop of great interest is the *tiruvasi* which is ovalish mounted with flames at regular intervals and at either ends of the base two dwarf *ganas* are placed. This feature is unusual among the bronze Nataraja images. The left *gana* plays the symbols while the right one has a flute thus forming the orchestra for the great dancer. Siva places his robust right leg family on the apaseuara the dwarf creature struggling to rise the need while grasping the small in the left hands. The lifted left leg, slender and sharply tends downwards at an angle. The *nupura* has bells. The force and rhythm of the movement is suggested by the floating sashes of the drapery, the end flourishes touch the sides of the *prabha*. the upper right hand plays *damaru* touching the *prabha* while the left (lits or) lifts the flame. The lower right in *abhaya* while the palm of the left hand pulled across the body hangs loosely at the wrist in an artistic way.

Investigation and Retrieval:

The Government of Tamil Nadu deputed Inspector General of Police, a Dy. S. P. of Police, Crime Branch and C. I. D. to USA. The INTERPOLE was also approached.

Investigation in Fort worth Texas revealed that one Mr. Binakulasi and Mr. Albert Amran of Everest Art Gallery London had deliberately given false declaration and sold it to Kimbell Art Museum Texas USA which purchased it in good faith for 6,00,000 U. S. dollars in August, 1979. Tamil Nadu Government requested Government of India to take action regarding its retrieval. Indian Embassy at Washington pursued the case with the department of State in U.S.A.

The Director of Kimbell Art Museum himself, suspected that the bronze might be a stolen one and contacted the Indian Embassy Washington in good faith without any outside pressure. Kimbell Art Museum was requested by the Government of India to return this bronze. However, the Kimbell Art Museum suggested that they would keep the idol for ten years for exhibition and afterwards arrange to return it at their own expense. Tamil Nadu Government did not agree to this suggestion. Kimbell Art Museum suggested getting of a gift of another antiquity from Tamil Nadu in

return of the stolen idol so that monetary loss suffered by the Museum could be compensated. This was also not agreed by the government though it was ready to give all assistance if the said Museum preceded against L. P. Chorasias and others for the recovery of the amount paid at the time of purchase of the stolen idol.

Ultimately the Kimbell Art Museum agreed to return the idol after Indemnity agreement was signed by the government of India on 12.8.1985. The idol was then returned to Indian Embassy in Washington. It was brought back to India by the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India in May, 1986 and handed over the same to the Commissioner and Secretary, Endowments department. Government of India conveyed gratification and thanks to Kimbell Art Museum for their cooperation and return of the Nataraja.

IV Lost Nataraja from Gudimallam (PL 4)

This unique bronze belongs to the Metropolitan class. It was in the famous temple of Parasuramesvara at Gudimallam (Chittur District, A. P.) besides other images and Sivakamasundari of later date. Nataraja (*Kuttaperumal*) was set up here during the 4th regnal year²⁰ of Raja Raja, the great Chola monarch (989 A. D.) who caused certain perpetual endowments for the festivals and offerings to the God. This is the earliest specimen known of the time of Raja Raja. This robust bronze image of early Chola art²¹, presents bewitching smile on the lips with crescent moon tucked to the *jatas*. He tramples the *Apasmara*. The halo (*Prabhavali*) of flames is circular. He is four-handed, in his upper right hand *damaru*, the left upper *ardhachandra-mudra* carries the flame, lower right in *abhaya*, left *gajahasta* pointing to the lifted foot adds grace to the robust stance. However, it is apparent that in recent times the lower part of the left leg has been repaired in a bad way. A unique feature of this image lies in the depiction of *Pushpikas* (flower rosettes) in between the flowing *jatavalis* and the placement of Ganga (right side) in the locks tucked to *Prabha*. Ganga with her merman tail and *namaskara mudra* is gracefully watching the dance of the master in utter delight. We get a similar depiction of Ganga in the specimens of Tiruppallanam Aliyur and Kumbakonam. The high *Kesamakuta*²² adds dignity. The image is perhaps the earliest creation of the great monarch Raja Raja-I who in a later inscription²³ issued during his 29th regnal year (1014 A. D.) prescribed the form of *Adavallan*. "one solid image of Adavallan having four divine arms, the Goddess Gangabhattacharaki on the braided hair; nine braids of hair and seven *Pumalai* (flower garlands)".

V. Bronze Bahubali: Samuel Eilenberg Collection:

An image of Bahubali, western Chalukyan 6th century A. D., height 11.1cm is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA, considered to be the best specimen of this class. Bahubali or Gommatesvara is the son of the first Jaina *Tirthankara* Rishabhanatha. His standing posture is very

specific meditational pose of *Jainas* known as *Kayotsarga*, erect and symmetrical, with the feet firmly planted on the ground, hands not touching the sides. He is shown here as a short sturdy youth standing on a high circular double-tiered lotus pedestal, the creeping vines wrapping around the legs, body and arms. He is sky-clad. As U. P. Shah²⁴ has stated this is "the earliest figure of Bahubali as yet discovered in India" and the *Kuladevata* of the gangas of Karnataka. This specimen is no more in India and found part of the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and mentioned as a gift of Samuel Eilenberg²⁵, 1987. (Acc. no. 1987.142.339). How it went out of the country is a mystery?

To conclude

When an Indian antiquity or Art Treasure surfaces abroad and when that country is not a signatory to UNESCO convention, the process of retrieval has to be gone through the courts which are certainly dilatory, time consuming and prohibitively expensive. This has happened in the case of retrieval of Pathur Nataraja from U. K. The legal battle was fought for nearly 14 years (1977-1991) at a cost of over 4-crore rupees. Keeping in view the Sivapuram Nataraja case in a recently held Regional Workshop of UNESCO on the "Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property" (Thailand, 24-28 Feb., 1992), Indian along with 12-other Asian countries recommended for "total ban on preparation of True-of-original replicas of art objects, and art treasures of same size, type, material, and fabric. Such replicas lead to the theft and illicit export of originals". In India the Customs Act, 1962, is not adequate as the check of International Cargo is merely 10% or so. Cultural Property cannot be treated as ordinary merchandise. Most of the exit points at the sea ports or Air Cargo Units do not have adequate staff, both administrative and technical, who are trained to identify the Antiquities and Art Treasures so coming under baggage. We learn that Sri Lanka has made strict provisions in this regard. The Cultural Property Act-1988 (Clause-73), forbids Export of Antiquities. Even A-class Diplomatic baggages are checked at the exit points (Sea and Air Customs).

While one agrees in principle that all the past cases of illicit export cannot be revoked and retrieval sought for by the countries of origin - efforts should be made for return of extremely rare and irreplaceable cultural properties to the country of origin. Several catalogues²⁶ published in recent years from U. S. have revealed how invaluable antiquities and art treasures from various developing and under-developed countries like India, Cambodia, Thailand, Tibet, Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Java reached U.K. and U.S. It is felt that outstanding cases of retrieval should be world-wide publicised²⁷. The case studies regarding the theft, illicit export and transfer of ownership of Antiquities and Art Treasures should be undertaken and published by UNESCO so that awareness may lead to ethical control and

effectively check recurrence of illicit export.

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Bronzes of Tamil Nadu – Some Salient Aspects

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All categories of five arts have been practised in Tamil Nadu from very early times. With the revival of Hinduism on an unprecedented scale here from the 6th century A. D. brought about by the great seers and saints viz. the Alvars and Nayanmars, the rulers of the land used the arts and crafts for the promotion of the various religions like Vaishnavism, Saivism and the cult of folk deities. From small beginnings, the arts grew to great heights, over the centuries due to the large demand for them by the people. Thus there came into existence large-sized temples culminating in the multi-enclosed and multi-towered temple complexes like those at Srirangam and Madurai, fine sculptures adorning the various parts of a temple and beautiful paintings embellishing the walls and towers of temples like those at Thanjavur. The development of architecture, sculpture, etc. was due to the increased religious activity which primarily centered round the worship of deities in the temples. Besides the permanent idols installed in these structures, the ritual of worship required a variety of images for other purposes. Originally wood was employed for these movable figures. But owing to its perishable nature, it was discarded. Metal, first copper and then bronze was used widely instead of making images for a variety of purposes like taking out in procession (*utsava beras*) for bathing (*Snapanam beras*) etc. Here we shall briefly see about certain salient aspects of the art of making sculptures in bronze.

Growing demand for such sculptures:

As mentioned above, the increased religious activity over the centuries from 6th century A. D. onwards in Tamil Nadu caused the art of making images in metal flourishing. The Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandyas and Vijayanagara rulers who successively ruled over Tamil Nadu encouraged the *Sthapatis* to produce more and more images of metal for installing in the temples they caused to be built throughout Tamil Nadu. During the early Pallava and early Pandya rule (Circa – 600 A. D. to 900 A. D.) not many temples were built and so the need for producing bronzes then was limited. Existence of a few bronze sculptures of this period testify to this. The image of Nataraja in Chatura form of dance from Kuram is an example of this phase. The main reason for the paucity of metal images of this period was probably the non-flourishing nature of economy of the times. From 900 A. D. to 1300 A. D., Tamil Nadu was ruled by the powerful Chola dynasty though in the later half of the period the Pandyas of Madurai superseded the Cholas to some extent. The Cholas were warriors par excellence and Rajaraja I and his famous son Rajendra I toured all over South India and conquered the various other contemporary kingdoms and brought into Tamil Nadu a vast amount of booty; Rajendra I especially

having sent armies to Kadaram and other places in Malaya and other countries in the east collected a huge wealth and brought it into his own country. The enormous wealth thus accumulated was used by these kings and their successors primarily for propagating the religious activities on a royal scale throughout Tamil Nadu and for building temples of great size, which were provided with funds for elaborate ritualistic worship in them. Elaboration of rituals necessitated a vast number of images in metal; and the metal images naturally were large in size to match the prowess and prestige of the rulers commissioning them. The images were all made in solid metal weighing very heavy and costing extremely high. The images of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman from Vadakkuppanaiyur, the image of Tiruvalluvar Nataraja, the Nataraja image in the Big Temple at Thanjavur, the Nataraja at Konerirajapuram and that in the Museum at Amsterdam are good examples belonging to this period. Many more pieces of this class and of this period are found in the numerous temples of Tamil Nadu. During the Vijayanagara period bronzes were made in large numbers and presented to the temples for worship by the rulers as well as important persons of the times. It should be noted, however, that the images made during this period were small in size and a good many of them were not made of completely solid metal but with a core of sand. To this period belong a large number of images of folk deities like Karuppan, Kaliyamman, Peariamman, Aiyannar, etc. for during this time the rural populace began to worship these grave deities to a surprisingly increasing measure. Thus during the long period of about a thousand and more years Tamil Nadu witnessed the production of bronze sculptures in thousands many of which are still under worship in the various temples in the country.

Concepts favoured:

While making idols in bronze, there is a necessity to have the themes dictated by the need of the worship in the temples. For worship in the Vaishnava temples images of Vaishnava concepts were needed; in the Saiva temples images of Saiva concepts were needed. In the Saiva temples images of Saiva concepts were required; in the Sakta temples images of Sakta concepts were used; and so on. Numerous concept and stones were used and so on. Soon Numerous concepts and stories find a place each in the different vaishnava, Saiva, Sakta. Several stories and concepts from the Agamas were chosen for depiction in stone sculpture and in painting. Only selected concepts were made use of in making bronze images of them for installing in the temples for worship. However, over the centuries more and more concepts from the repertoire of the Agamas were taken up for making bronze

images of them. To begin with, for worship in the Vaishnava temples, the concept of Vishnu with Sridevi and Bhudevi, in the standing or the seated position was used. Though a very important Vaishnava concept is *sesha sanyin* or *Anantashayin*, due to the fact that the main deity of the most sacred Vaishnava temple at Srirangam is *Seshashayin* images in bronze of this concept, that too in miniature size are known only from Vijayanagara times. Then some of the Avatars of Vishnu like *Varaha*, *Narasimha*, etc., were taken up for representation in sculpture, the *Ramavatasa* with *Lakshmana*, *Sita* and *Hanuman* was first represented in a princely fashion, but later as divinities, and several aspects of *Krishnavatara* like *Kaliyamardana*, *Navanitakrishna*, *Natanakrishna* were grown in bronze, but later *Krishna* with *Rukmini* and *Satyabhama* and *Venugopala* with consorts were taken up for representation. Only later images of the *Alvars* like *Tirumangaiyan* were made. Amongst these the images of Vishnu with consort and *Rama* group and *Krishna* with consorts were made through the centuries, as these concepts were fundamental to the Vaishnavism. Nevertheless an examination of these images shows that *Rama* and *Krishna* were given attributes of divinity only from the 12th Century and that images of *Alvars* came to be made also from then on.

So far as *Saiva* concepts are concerned, a variety of them was chosen for representation in bronze. Commonly chosen items are *Siva-Parvati*, *Somaskanda*, *Karikala*, *Vrishavahana*, *Bhikshatana* and *Kalyanasundara*. Of these *Siva-Parvati* and *Somaskanda* images were invariably needed in the *Siva* temples. Except for the variation in workmanship due to the difference in age there was no change in the forms of these images. The most popular and common *Saiva* concept used for making images through the centuries is the *Nataraja* concept. The main deity of the most sacred temple of the *Saiva* temple at *Chidambaram* represents this concept. So, in all the *Saiva* temples built through the ages, images of *Nataraja* were invariably set up and worshipped. Hence amongst the bronzes of *Saiva* persuasion, the most numerous are *Nataraja* images. In representing this concept the *Sthapatis* of different periods had used their imagination to a great extent and had produced images of *Nataraja* in such forms as *Chatura-tandava* (*Kuram*), *Urdhvatandava* (*Tiruvallangadu* near *Kanchipuram*) *Gajasurari-tandava*, and *Ananda tandava*. The last mentioned form is said to be one based on the dance form of the deity at *Chidambaram*. This form caught the imagination of the whole of *Tamil Nadu* so that innumerable images of this type through the ages were made. An artist of the *Pandyan* territory had created a bronze *Nataraja* (*poruppumettupatti*) showing the right leg lifted (*Kalmari adunkal*) a concept of *Nataraja* popular in the temple at *Madurai*.

Of the *Sakta* concepts well known are the *Ichha Sakti*, *Kriyasakti*, *Jnana-Sakti*, *Parvati*, etc. These are benign forms and the goddesses of these forms are shown in an almost identical fashion with two arms or four arms in a standing pose. But the fierce aspects of *Sakti* like *Mahishamardini*,

Durga, *Chamunda* are represented exhibiting ferociousness.

Apart from the above mentioned concepts, those of *Ganapati Subramanya*, *Saints* like *Kannappa*, *Manikkavachaka*, *Appar*, *Sundarar* and *Sambandar* were also represented in bronze. A study of these images of saints we come to know that they were made and installed in temples only from the 11th century. Similarly the concepts of folk deities like *Sasta*, *Kaliyamman*, *Karuppan*, were also used for making images of them for worship in village temples. Though examples of images of this category are known from early times, large number of them, in small sizes, belong to late Vijayanagar and still later times.

Though the revival Hinduism in *Tamil Nadu* dislodged the two aesthetic religious viz. *Jainism* and *Buddhism* from their earlier vantage positions in the 7th-8th centuries A. D., the votaries of these religions continued in some parts of the country. They too, on the analogy of the *Vaishnavites* and *Saivites* built temples for their saints and seers, concepts for whom were taken up for making images of them in bronze for worship in the temples. So there are bronze images of *Buddha*, *Tara*, *Avalokitesvara*, *Jvalamalini*, *Mahavira*, *Parsvanatha*, etc. Some of these images of early periods (9th-10th century) share the beauty of workmanship met with in the *Vaishnavite* and *Saivite* bronzes of those times.

Metals used:

Earliest images known so far e.g. the *Nataraja* idol from *Kuram* (Circa 7th century A. D.) are made of copper. This metal was given up, and instead the alloy of copper and tin i.e. bronze came to be used for making images from the 10th century A. D. onwards. This involved metallurgical technology, requiring extracting copper and tin from ores. Though copper might have been obtained from mines in India, tin probably was obtained from other countries like *Malaya*. Images in solid bronze of huge sizes (*Nataraja* of *Konerirajapuram* being about 1.5 M high) were made and they required a lot of copper and tin. Some of the *Chola* kings having had contacts with foreign countries mentioned above might have brought the necessary quantity of tin from those countries. Upto the 17th century bronze was generally used for making images. Subsequently images in bronze were made for very flourishing and important temples patronised by wealthy landlords. Brass was the metal used in the making of idols intended for other ordinary temples. It is generally believed that these images are made of an alloy of five metals viz. copper, brass, tin, gold and silver i.e. *Panchaloha*. In fact it is not so, only bronze is the metal used in these images.

Techniques employed:

These images are made generally by two technical methods. The *Silpa-sastras* contain details regarding these methods which have been and are still used by *sthapatis* of *Tamil Nadu*. One of them is called the lost wax *Madhuchetistha* technique. According to this the required figure of a god is first made of wax and it is coated with a specially prepared

clay. This was dried and latter holes were made in the clay coat, through which molten metal was poured in. The wax inside melts and gets drained off through the holes. Then the outer coat of clay is broken. The rough images which is uncovered then, is chastened to make the figures all right. The eyes of the image were carved only at the last moment. The other method is called the hollow cast one. Here the core figure is made of a mixture of sand and clay. It is coated with wax. This wax coat is then encased in clay-coat which is dried. Through the clay coat, then, the molten metal is poured, which drains off the wax coat, but leaves the sand clay core inside intact. This core is removed by mechanical means afterwards. The result is an image with a hollow inside. As in the other case, the hollow image is then

chastened to give it the perfect appearance.

We have come across a number of bronze figures in modest and small sizes, especially the images representing gramadevatas, which display the adoption of a different method in their making. In these case the clay and sand core used for making hollow cast images mentioned above, is not removed but kept in tact. This makes the figures look like those made of solid metal. Further it is seen that the alloy used for the images is not generally of good quality and so, they get damaged very easily. Making of such flimsy images are resorted to generally by villagers possessing little means but with a genuine desire to make such metal images and donate them to the temples of their favourite gods and goddesses in their villages.

Bronze or Arca Form of the Supreme

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Image worship has a long history of more than two thousand years. Temple art is also an equally ancient art and it developed around icons and images. Casting of icons or sculpturing them is also an important craft all over India and particularly in the South. A number of icons of various materials have been cast some of which have been installed in temples. Many icons were buried down in the course of history and later unearthed either to be installed again in some temple or to be kept in a museum as exhibits.

To a visitor, an icon in a museum is a piece of beauty or an artifact of material culture. Not so to a devotee. The Vaishnava tradition in South India prohibits a devotee to look upon an image as something material. For him it is an ethereal form of the Supreme Lord. It is sacrilegious to look upon an image as something made of certain metal or mud or stone. One who does so is said to be testing of own mother's chastity.

Pillailokacarya compares the five types of water to the five forms of the Lord:

The Lord residing within the heart is like the subsoil water. The Supreme Lord in Heaven is like the cosmic water. The emanation form of the Lord (Vyuha) is like the Milk Ocean. The Avatars are like the flood waters in the river. The iconic image of the Lord is like the water in the pools in the river (bed).¹

In this passage Pillailokacarya suggests that the water that remains as pools in the riverbed when the flood waters recede will be easily accessible to a thirsty man. The other waters such as sub-soil water, cosmic water (which according to Puranic geography is believed to surround the cosmic egg of the universe) and the Milk Ocean (which is the most distant ocean of the seven oceans that separate the seven layers of the universe), for the man who wishes to quench his thirst, are very difficult to obtain. Similarly, the flood waters, because they only occur at specific times, are not easily accessible all time. Because the image is like the pools in riverbed, we are to understand that God is easily accessible to the devotee via this arca form.

God's effective presence in the present is primarily through the arca (icon) form. A very large proportion of the stanzas of the Tiruvaymoli or devoted to praising God resident at various particular places, all of which have become now, if they were not already in Nammalvar's time, places of religious pilgrimage. It might seem incongruous that Nammalvar could think of the same God who is the primordial cause of the universe being fully present in the small man-made image. But Nammalvar's thinking proceeds along quite different lines. To him it is a sign of God's greatness that He can be fully present in the small as well as in the large;

His greatness is such that he can place himself within the framework of any human being. Even the limitations of finite human beings cannot limit God's condescending grace. Nammalvar delights in juxtaposing the idea of God's transcendence with his radical immanence :

Know this, O you people who inhabit all the worlds that are : There is no power other than the supreme power who is at Tirukkukur. He is the God to whom the devas bow their heads in reverence; the one who created the devas and the many worlds and swallowed them again, hiding them within himself, the one who measured this universe, who lifted the world from the water. Tell me if your mind can be in doubt when you keep all this in your vision.

பரந்த தெய்வமும் பல்லுலகும் படைத்தன்னுடனே விழுங்கி
கரந்துமிழ்ந்து கிடந்திடந்தது கண்டும் தெளியகில்லீர்!
சிரங்களால் அமரர் வணங்கும் திருக்குருகரதனுள்
பரன் திறமன்றிப் பல்லுலகீர்! தெய்வம் மறநிலை
பேசுகின்றேன்.

-திருவாய்மொழி. 4-10-3.

So to a devotee an icon is not just an icon but an arca form of the Supreme. The Supreme Lord makes himself conjured up before the devotee in that particular form. This is the *Saulabhya* (Accessibility) aspect of the Lord. The Lord makes Himself available so easily to a devotee. The devotee as it were crosses the barriers of time and distance and stands before his cherished deity.

A number of incidents have been narrated in the Divya Prabandhas of the devotees being led to the Supreme Lord. Tiruppanalvar was a low caste devotee residing on the south bank of the sacred Kaveri always merged in singing the songs in praise of the Lord. Being a *Harijan*, he did not want to enter the temple of Sri Ranganatha, as it would have polluted it. Once the high priest of the temple came to the river and Tiruppanalvar was as usual in his musical ecstasy. The priest hurled a pebble at Tiruppanalvar to get him away from the river bank. It hit him and blood gushed from his forehead. Tiruppanalvar was jolted into consciousness and made way for the priest. The priest took the holy water from the river for performing ablutions of Sri Ranganatha. When he entered the sanctum sanctorum he was in great consternation as he found blood oozing from the forehead of the icon. Lord Ranganatha chided the priest and asked him to make amends by carrying Tiruppanalvar on his back into the sanctum as the latter won't enter the temple on his own feet for fear of polluting it. The priest did accordingly and carried the *Harijan* devotee on his back. Tiruppanalvar was thereafter known as *Munivahana* - one carried by a Muni (priest). Tiruppanalvar viewed his lord of whom he had only heard so

far, he burst into tears of joy and hymns after hymns flowed from his mouth, sending the whole atmosphere charged with devotion. This poem is known as Amalanatipiran. One of the stanza runs thus:

The Lord of Srirangam has cut as under all my burden-
some old sins, He has now made me His exclusive
servant. He has also entered into my heart. The Lord
beautified by Lakshmi and Vaijayanti has indeed cap-
tured and enslaved me. My eyes have seen Him and I
have now nothing to see.

பாரமாய பழவினை பற்றறுத்து என்னைத்தன்
வாரமாகி வைத்தான் வைத்தன்றியென்னுள் புகுந்தான்
கோரமாதவம் செய்தான் கொலறியென் அரங்கத்தம்மாள்
திரு
வாரமார் பதன்றோ அடியெனை யாட்கொண்டதே.

~அமலனாதிபிரான்-5.

So saying, according to tradition, he merged himself within the Lord.

All the hymns of Alvars pertaining to the Arca form of the Lord situated in different places. These places are well known as *Divya Desas*. For example in Tiruvaymoli (4-10-2) the commentary by Periyavaccanpillai offers a reason for the God to come and dwell in the small temples all over India. He remarks that a question occurs to an unbelieving devotee as to how the god will be inhabiting this mundane temple leaving the luxury in His heavenly abode. Compared with the celestial home, the temple on the earth will be extremely crude and devoid of all comforts.

Periyavaccanpillai sees the love of the Lord towards his devotees. The Supreme Lord is unhappy in the heaven as all His children are on the earth. He is both father and mother of His children and as mother always loves to be with her child, so also the Supreme Lord prefers the discomforts on the earth to be near His children.

Later again in 12th century A.D., we find Parasara Bhattar son of Kuresa and a direct disciple of Ramanujacarya who looks upon the Lord of Srirangam as Alaki-yamanavala - a handsome bridegroom with exquisite charms. His red lips and saphire hue is extremely bewitching. Lord is no more a bronze to him but a living presence emanating the splendour everywhere.

There is again a beautiful incident in the life of Parasara Bhattar. Parasara Bhattar entered the temple of Srirangam and saw the image, expecting an abhisekam.*

The utsavabera of Lord Ranganatha clad in wet cloth was placed in Abhiseka Mantapa. Parasara Bhattar was reminded of practice during the dispute one takes the extreme steps of swearing on God with wet cloth on him, in the middle of the house. Then the following imaginary conversation appeared in the form of following sloka.

Lord: O Soul, thou art mine!

Soul: No, I am not Thine, But mine!

Lord: How is that?

Soul: But how is that what Thou sayest?

Lord: What I say is proved by the Vedas, which are my revelations.

Soul: But listen that 'I am for me' is proved by my prescriptive right of timeless enjoyment of myself!

Lord: But there is an objection to your right.

Soul: Show, Sir, who objected and where is it stated?

Lord: Find it stated in My works such as Bhagavad Gita.

Soul: But it is thy own statement! Are there witnesses thereto?

Lord: O' Yes - My beloved wisement - the saints and sages.

Soul: Of course being Thy own, they must be Thy witnesses; and necessarily do side with Thee!

Lord: O unbelieving Soul! May I now solemnly swear before all; "Thou art Mine, not thine"?

त्वं मेऽहं मे कुतस्त्वं तदापि कुत इदं वेदमन्त्राणां
पञ्चानादिसिद्धदायकं त्वं त्विदं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं
इत्येवमेषः कथं जीताविष्टं मेनिरिति त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं
इति त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं त्वं ॥

From imaginary conversation between the Lord present in the form of the image at Srirangam and the devotee reveals the entire concept of the person of the Supreme Being. Though many more examples could be cited in the extensive literature of alvars and other devotees, I would like to conclude this paper with the Poykai Alvar's words:-

தமருகந்த தெய்வருவம் அவ்வுருவம் தானே
தமருகந்த தெப்பேர்மற் றப்பேர் - தமருகந்து
எவ்வண்ணம் சிந்தித்திமையா திருப்பரே
அவ்வண்ணம் அழியான் ஆம்.

-முதல் திருவந்தாதி-44.

* Fixing the Kavaca on Utsavabera as well as mulabera is a late practice. During the time of Parasara Bhattar the Utsavabera was kept in the Mantapa without any Kavaca. Hence he was so much pleased to enjoy the beauty of Lord Ranganatha.

Bronze Icons of Sri Vaishnava Saints

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The Bhakti movement that swept Tamil Nadu in the 7th and 8th centuries A. D. greatly popularised the temple and icononic worship here. The Bhakti hymns popularised the Puranic themes and devotional approach so that in due course the hymns of Tamil saints - Alvars and Nayanmars were considered Tamil Vedas and revered as the main source for temple worship. 'Padal-petra Sthalas' and 'Divya-desas' were the respectful terms given to them by the Saivas and Vaishnavas respectively.

The post-bhakti period coinciding with a Chola period witnessed the codification of the hymns and canonisation of the Tamil saints. Nathamuni (10th century A. D.) is said to have collected the 4000 songs of the Alvars and classified them under four equal parts, and equated them with the four Vedas. He called it as Dravida Veda Sagaram and Divya-Prabhandham. The hymns were introduced into the temple and sung on equal footing with Sanskrit vedas. The Vaishnavites attached great importance to the Alvars, their hymns and the holy places sung by them which they respectively named as Divyasuris, Divyaprabandham and Divya-desas. All the great acharyas (preceptors) like Nathamuni, Alavandar (Yamunacharya), Ramanuja, Vedanta Desika, Manavala Mahamuni were profoundly inspired and influenced by the Bhakti hymns of the Alvars and indeed they were great exponents of both Sanskrit and Tamil scriptures and hence called as the "Ubhaya Vedantins".

As a sequel to this development on the theological side, the Alvars were deified from the 10th century onwards and in due course festivals were conducted in their honour particularly on their birth days (tiru-nakshatram). Thus, there was a growing need to have Utsava Vighras installed for them in the temple. The impact was felt at different Vaishnava centres and particularly in the birth places (avatara-sthalas) of the respective saints. We have some excellent bronze specimens of the saints right from the Chola period through Vijayanagar and Nayak period. While there are certain general features applicable to the Bhakti-bimbas as laid down in the Agamas and Silpa Sastras, there are certain special iconographic features peculiar to each saint which distinguish them from others.

The general features are: Seated or standing with two hands in *anjali* having jata-bandha e.g. the three Mudal-Alvars (Pey, Bhutam and Poigai). It is very difficult to distinguish one from the other as all the three look alike. Tirumalisai Alvar is often depicted as seated or standing with *anjali-hasta*. Excellent images of Tirumalisai are available at his birth place Tirumalisai near Poonamallee and another of the Vijayanagar period in Triplicane. In the latter example, he is shown seated with *anjali-hasta*.

Tiruppan-alvar:

He belonged to the Panar community i.e. wandering minstrel. So he is sometimes depicted with the *yal* or Veena; but usually with *anjali*. The lute in some examples is found represented in the crook of one of his arms¹.

Tondaradippodi-alvar:

He is depicted in standing posture with *anjali* or carrying the flower basket e.g. Srirangam. He has a small tuft in his forehead (முக்குடும்பி) as he belonged to that Brahmin community. (Fig. 1)

Nammalvar and Madura Kavi:

Nammalvar or Satagopa, the author of the immortal Tiruvaymoli is considered as the greatest of the Alvars. He was a yogi who got enlightenment under the tamarind tree at Alvar Tirunagari (Tirunelveli Dt.). He is depicted as seated in Padmasana and one of his hands in Chin-mudra. Superb specimens of the 10th-11th centuries A. D. are found in Alvar Tirunagari and Srirangam. His head dress is called Kari-maran-kondai and he wears vagula flower garland (Vagulabaranan).

At Varadaraja Perumal temple, Kanchi he is depicted in a group - along with his disciple Madura Kavi and Nathmuni who set him hymns to music. It became as convention to have this inseparable trio in the same shrine e.g. Tirupati Govindaraja Swami Temple. Nathamuni is depicted with cymbals in his hands. His fine image is found at Srirangam also. In Kanchi shrine Nammalvar is depicted with his right hand half bent and held near the chest in Chin-mudra true to his verse in Tiruvay-moli.² "தொழுதொழு என் மனமே" (Fig. 2 and 3) Madura Kavi Alvar is shown with a pair of cymbals in his birth-place, Tirukkolor.

Peria-alvar:

He was a great devotee of Krishna. He was famous for singing the immortal verses beginning with 'Pallandu'. He is depicted either standing (as at his birth place) or seated with a pair of cymbals or in *anjali*. In some images, he is shown with a small tuft of hair in his forehead (munkudumi) as he belonged to that community. (Fig. 4)

Andal:

Perialvar's daughter Andal or Kodhai is revered by the Vaishnavas as Vishnu's consort and a separate shrine is assigned to her on par with Lakshmi in all Vishnu temples. She is depicted standing with a flower or parrot in her hand. She has a beautiful head-dress popularly called *Andal-Kondai* e.g. Srivilliputtur, Srirangam and Kanchi. There is a

Fig. 1 : Tondaradippadi Alvar,
Thiruppuvanam,
Madurai Dt.



Fig. 2 : Nammalvar, Madura Kavi
and Nathamuni,
Kanchipuram.

beautiful bronze icon of Andal or Sudikkodutha Nachiar at her birth place, Srivilliputtur. The tall and beautiful image of Andal at the Govindarajaswami temple, Tirupati is a fine example of Vijayanagar period.

Thirumangai-alvar:

Like Nammalvar, Thirumangai has also made a large contribution of hymns to the Four Thousand collection. He was a versatile and gifted poet. He was a chieftain of a small area called Alinadu and a contemporary of the Pallava king Nandivarman II Pallavamalla (8th century A. D.). He is said to have taken to highway robbery before he got divine enlightenment and became saint. He is depicted as a warrior or chieftain with a sword and a shield in his hands. The most outstanding bronze image of his is found in his erstwhile capital at Tirunagari in Sirkali Taluk. He is shown standing in *anjali* and a spear (vel) is separately kept leaning on the shoulder. Two other examples, tall and magnificent, are found at Kuraiyalur (his birth place) and Peruntottam. All the three mentioned above are of the middle Chola period. His consort Kumudini is shown standing by his side in the Tirunagari bronze. The one illustrated here is a fine example of Chola period (Fig. 5)

Kulasekhara-alvar:

He was a Chera king of the 7th century A. D. who was a great devotee of Rama on whom he has poured his heart in his Perumal Tirumoli. He is depicted usually in standing posture with a crown and his hands in *anjali*. A fine example of the Pandyan period is seen at Mannarkoil in Tirunelveli Dt. The one at Srirangam is also of great beauty.

On the whole, the majority of bronze images of the Alvars belong to the Vijayanagar and later times through as pointed out above, there are exquisite examples of the Chola and Pandyan times.

This general trend of deification of saints continued later also to include the line of the Acharyas (preceptors) who expounded the teachings of the Alvars. The image of Nathamuni at Srirangam and other places has already been mentioned.

Ramanuja:

The most important saint who is considered as the founder of the Visishtadwaita philosophy was Ramanuja or Udaiyavar. According to Sri Vaishnava tradition he was deified during his life-time and three bronze images were made during his last days by his devotees and got them blessed by him - at Srirangam (தருமன் திருமொனி), Sriperumbudur (தருமன் உத்த திருமொனி) Melkote (தருமன் திருமொனி). They are undoubtedly superb bronzes with life-like features. (Fig. 6). They show him seated with *anjali*, and tridanda is separately held. His images at Tirumalai and Kanchi depict him in Vyakhyana-mudra, as the expounder of the visishtadwaita philosophy. His image was installed in Kanchi in 1191 A. D. and he is seated with Vyakhyana-

mudra.³

Kurathalvar:

Ramanuja's chief disciple was Kurathalvar, the author of the Panchastavas. He is shown with blinded eyes and a beard. According to the *gurumarampara*, he was blinded by a king called Krimikanta as a punishment for his devotion to Vishnu. A good example of his image is to be seen in his birth place, Kuram near Kanchipuram.

Tirukkachi Nambi:

He is an elder contemporary of Ramanuja and also his teacher. He was doing fanning service to Lord Varadaraja at Kanchi. So he is depicted standing with a long-handled fan (alavattam) in his hand e.g. image in the Tirukkachinambi temple at Kanchipuram and also at Pundamalli, his birth place.

Vedanta Desika:

A great poet and preceptor who lived in the 14th century A. D. at Kanchi. He was a prolific writer and commentator. He is regarded as the apostle of the Vadakalai School of Sri Vaishnavism. He is depicted in seated posture with Vyakhyana-mudra e.g. Tuppil at Kanchi, and Tiruvendipuram.

Manavala Mahamuni (15th century A. D.):

Regarded as the apostle of Tenkalai School, he was written commentaries on the Alvar's hymns. As he was considered as an incarnation of Ramanuja, who was an *amisa* of the serpent Adishesha, he is shown seated under the hood of the Adishesha at Alvar Tirunagari. His disciples ash-tadiggajas are also shown in miniature size around the pedestal of his image.⁴

Thus, a study of the Vaishnava iconography in Tamil Nadu would show the gradual expansion to include the Tamil saints - Alvars and Acharyas. In making the icons, they took care to depict the distinctive features of each and every saint which shows the impact of Vaishnavite theology on the iconography.

References:

1. An inscription of 13th century from the temple of Vaikuntaperumal Temple, Tiruvannainallur refers to the setting up of his image in the temple.
2. K. V. Raman, Sri Varadarajaswami Temple, Kanchi p. 167
3. K. V. Raman, Op. Cit, p. 167
4. An interesting inscription from the Varadarajaswami temple at Kanchi dated A. D. 1555 records the endowments to all the 12 Alvars and many acharyas in temple during their tirunakshatram (birth day). The acharyas mentioned are Tirukkachi-nambi, Emberumanar (Ramanuja), Kurattalvar, Nathamuni and Manavala Mahamuni c.f. K. V. Raman, Op. Cit. p. 75

Fig. 3 : Nammalvar and
Ramanuja,
(Provenance Unknown)



Fig. 4 : Perialvar,
Thogur,
Thanjavur Dt.

Fig. 5 : Tirumangai,
Thanjavur Dt.



Fig. 6 : Ramanuja,
Sriperumpudur.

Tripurantaka in Art and Literature

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Tripurantaka is one of the Samhara murtis of Siva and this aspect refers to the episode of the destructions of three asuras namely, Vidyanmali, Tarakaksha and Kamalaksha who dwelt in three forts made of metal. His other terrific aspects are Kalantaka (destroyer of Kala, the god of death), Kamantaka (destroyer of Kama, the god of love), Gajantaka (destroyer of elephant asura). Each of these aspects indicates the destruction of a particular malevolent and troublesome demonical being.

The Tripurantaka episode is dealt at length in the *Karnaparva* of *Mahabharata* and the Puranic account of the story is based on the *samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*. The story can be briefly described thus: by the boons obtained from Brahma the three *asuras* could move in any direction as they desired and could be destroyed only by a single arrow. The gods could not tolerate the harassment of the asuras. Siva was requested for help and by acquiring extra assistance and strength he destroyed the forts and their inhabitants by a single arrow. Though there are different versions of the story, the destruction of the asuras by Siva by acquiring extra assistance and strength from the other gods is found in all the versions.

Like many aspects of Siva, this aspect of Tripurantaka finds mention in the *Satandriya*. Here he is said to have a single pair of arms holding a bow and arrow. In this anecdote Siva is praised as warrior par-excellence.

Coming to Tamil literature, this aspect of Tripurantaka has ample references both in concept and form. The *bhakti* movement gave a fillip to the art of metal casting and thus iconographical representations of gods and goddesses have come to us in large number and in varieties also.

Purananuru records that Tripurantaka having a bow and arrow in his hands, destroyed the three fortifications (எயிலு) of the *asuras* and got victory for the *devas*¹.

ஒங்கு மலைப்பெரு வில் பாம்பு ஞான்கொளீது

ஒரு கண்ண கொண்டு மூளையில் உடற்றி.

பெரு விறல் அமரர்க்கு வென்றி தந்த

கறை மீடற்று அண்ணல் காமர் சென்னிப்

Kalittogai refers to Tripurantaka as a destroyer of the three cities at the request of the *devas*². The *Silappadikaram* goes one step more while describing the aspect and say that Siva riding on a chariot drawn by four horses, shot an arrow on the *asuras* and burnt their castles³. Representations of this aspect in this way can be seen only in stone sculptures and in paintings. According to Sundaramurti's concept, Tripurantaka is two armed with bow and arrow⁴. Perhaps bronzes having one pair of arms confirms to the description Tevaram. yet another Verse in Tevaram attributes to Tripurantaka with eight arms, the representation of which is rarely met with.

The above survey shows that both the Sanskrit and Tamil

literature generally refers to Tripurantaka as a two armed deity.

Though the episode is quite interesting one from the point of view of its representation in *plastic art*, the great Tirumular aptly compares the three fortifications to that of three bad qualities and destruction of them is achieved by the episode.

இந்த மூன்றையும் மும்மலங்கள் என்று

கருதுகிறார். அவை நீக்கப்பட்டால் தீவன் சிவமாகிறது

"அப்பணி செஞ்சடை ஆதி புணதனை

முப்புரஞ் செற்றனை என்பர்கள் மூடர்கள்

முப்புரமாவது மும்மல காரியம்

அப்புரம் எத்தனை யாரறிவாரே"

This episode is stated to have taken place in the temple at Tiruvadigai, in South Arcot District and the representation of this aspect in the temple is superb. This can be appreciated when we read Appar's Tevaram⁵.

சென்று அச்சிலை வாங்கிச் சேர்வுத்தாள்காண்

தியம்பகன்காண்; திரிபுரங்கள் மூன்றும்

பொன்றப் பொடி. ஆக நோக்கினான் காண்;

பூதன் காண்; பூதப்படையாளிகாண்;

This Tripurantaka aspect is a favourite theme for the Pallavas and the Cholas. There are only a few Pallava metal icons of this theme. The famous two armed Tripurantaka in the Gautam Sarabai collection is a masterpiece of the Pallava idiom and confirms to the form described in the Tamil literature. When he is represented with four hands, the upper only carry the usual attributes, i.e., axe and antelope, while the lower ones are holding bow and arrow. (Sometime the positions are indicated as in the case of metal icons). The pose here is the one adopted by the archers and the artists are faithful to this tradition.

In the Chola period the concept is depicted in sculptures in the temples for example in the Big Temple at Thanjavur. The Cholas being staunch saivites were responsible for installing Tripurantaka metal icons in their temples. The representation in stone in the Big Temple and the metal icons in the Art Gallery, Thanjavur are striking ones.

Coming to the representation of the theme in paintings one cannot forget the great mural in the inner walls of the Big Temple at Thanjavur. This anecdote is *magnum opus*. In the panel Siva with eight arms and magnificent physique stands on the chariot. The terrifying expression on his face is accelerated particularly by the knitting of the eyebrows. In the combat with the Tripurantakas, Siva is assisted by all the gods and *ganas*. The depiction of the gods and *ganas* in the posture of their weapons and hurrying in great haste towards the host of the demons headed by the Tripurantakas, is striking feature of the theme in the painting.

**Tripurantaka,
Thanjavur Town,
Art Gallery Thanjavur, (Plate I)**

Siva stands on a small *padmasana* over a large rectangular *bhadabana* and in the *tribhanga* pose. He wears the usual ornaments and the *skandhamala* is seen on the right shoulder, a characteristic feature of the Early Chola period. The position of the attributes, which are held in between upraised fingers, is rather peculiar in this figure, instead of their being in the usual position. (usually the antelope will be on the left hand and the axe will be on the right hand, which is not the case in the figure under reference). A well executed piece with restrained ornaments, this image has all features of the Early Chola period



**Tripurantaka,
Tirukkodikkaval, Thanjavur District,
About 11th Century A.D. (Plate II)**

Siva as Tripurantaka stands on the *padmasana*, in an excellent *dvibhanga* pose. He carries the emblems in the upper hands (deer is missing in the upper left hand), while the lower hands are in the attitude of holding bow and arrow. He wears usual ornaments. *Skandhamala* is present only on the right side, an early characteristic feature. The restrained ornamentation, the anatomy of the figure particularly the disposition of the lower arms and the legs are in tune with the spirit of the Chola art.

This is one of the finest example of Siva as Tripurantaka.

**Tripurantaka and Tripurasundari
Tarangambadi, Thanjavur District,
About 11th Century A.D. (Plate III)**

In this image of excellent workmanship of 11th Century A.D., Siva as Tripurantaka stands on a square plate in a *tribhanga* pose. The upper right hand attribute is missing, while the upper left holds a deer. The two lower hands are in a posture, of holding a bow and arrow. The disposition of the hands (lower ones) is quite interesting and noteworthy.

His consort forming the group, also stands in a *tribhanga* pose and wears an ornate head, dress. She wears the usual ornaments. The disposition of the right hand in the *Katakamudra*, is superb and speaks for the beauty of the image.



**Tripurantaka,
Vallam, Thanjavur District,
About 13th Century A.D. (Plate IV)**

Siva stands on a pedestal square in shape, with the right leg firmly positioned on it. Left leg is placed on the head of the *apasmara* figure. The upper arms carry the usual attributes i.e. axe (broken) and antelope. The lower right arm and the lower left arm are in the attitude of holding the bow and the arrow. He wears the usual ornaments. Stylistically speaking, this bronze does not have the subtleness of the Tirukko-dikkaval Tripurantaka. Moreover it is heavily ornamented.

"The Cholas being great warriors and conquerors, and Raja Raja himself the greatest of them all, it is in the fitness of things that the theme of Tripurantaka the mighty warrior god is glorified here initially as the key note of the Chola power".

The representation of this theme can be seen in wood also in the temple cars where the entire battle scene is vividly portrayed. Since wood being a cheaper medium, rare iconographical features with full compliments are met within

wood carvings. In the wood carvings Siva is represented as raising his right leg to indicate the action of actual fighting. Sometimes, the pinaka bow is shown in a most realistic fashion. The three *asuras* with bow and arrow will be represented within small circles to indicate their portion in the castles.

It may be seen that the Tripurantaka theme which was a favourite of the Pallavas continued to represent in one medium or other till late 11th Century A.D.

Bronze Images of Saiva Nayanmars

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The Bakti cult of the Pallava-Pandya period (6-9 century A.D.) to popularise Saivism in the Tamil country was initiated by the activities of the sixty three nayanmars. Among them Sambandar, Sundarar, Appar and Manickavasagar were the celebrated four saints who have attained a significant place in the religious history of Tamil Nadu. They are great saiva devotees immersed in the saiva mythology and philosophy. They visited many temples situated in different parts of the Tamil country and praised the deities presiding over there. Their hymns show intense devotion and appreciation of saiva forms and cults. Their hymns have also inspired the common man and created an awareness in the saiva pantheon. Later all the hymns of the four nayanmars were collected and codified into eight books are Tirumurais. However these songs were sung by devotees in several temples even before they were codified into several books. The recitation of these songs have become an important ritual from the times of the later Pallavas. The Chola kings provided munificent gifts and endowments to temples and singers for the proper maintenance of the singers of Tiruppadiyam in these temples.

Soon these nayanmars were given a respectable place in the temple complex. They were deified and their images of stone and bronze were slowly installed in different temples. These images occupied an important place in the saiva pantheon and pujas were performed. Though it is difficult to suggest the exact date of the deification of Nayanmars and their subsequent installation into the temples, it may be observed that they appear in the temples atleast from the early Chola period. There are a few Chola inscriptions of this period which record the installation of bronze images of nayanmars. In the Brihadisvara temple at Thanjavur, Rajaraja I installed the image of Siruttondar with his wife Tiruvenkattu Nangai and their son Siralan¹. One of his officers, Tennavan Muvendavelan had installed the images of Nambiyaruran, Thirujnanasambandar, and Tirunavukkarasar in the same temple². Another officer, Adityan Suryan had also installed the images of Nambiaruran and his wife Nangai Paravaiyar, Tirunavukkarasar and Sundarar³. The images of Miladudaiyar, another nayanmar was also installed in the Brihadisvara temple by Rajendral⁴.

Among the bronze images of saiva nayanmars, the images of Sambandar are modelled in the form of a small boy. He received his initiation at the tender age of three from Siva and Parvathi. He had visited many temples and performed some miracles also. Therefore his images were always depicted in the form of a small boy. His bronzes are modelled in two forms. In the first form he is shown as a standing small boy without any dress. This naked small boy

image is from Chidambaram⁵. He is shown in tribhanga with a rounded face. His hair is arranged in the form of a dhammilla, with the forehead decorated with curls of hair. He has two hands and in the left he holds a small pot. He wears ornaments on his neck and legs.

In the second form, Sambandar is shown as a dancing boy with the left leg firmly placed on the pedestal. This Sevilimedu bronze is of fine workmanship. Sambandar is shown as a small boy without any dress. He has two hands, the right hand is in pracharita hasta while his left is in suchi hasta. He wears a patrakundala, neck ornaments and a channavira. He has a rounded face with well moulded features. The hair is arranged in small folds and curls with a dhammilla featuring on the top of his head. His right leg is bent and slightly lifted up as if to suggest the performance of a dance. His left leg is firmly planted on a padmapita.

The Nallur bronze is another good piece depicting the usual qualities of Sambandar. This image is well illustrated by R. Nagaswamy⁶. His right hand is in suchi hasta while his left hand is in pracharita hasta. His left leg is planted on a padma pita and his right leg is shown performing a dance piece. The whole body is gracefully modelled. His jata is arranged beautifully in the dhammilla form. He has a udara-bandha and wears ornaments on neck and legs.

The Sambandar image from the Oushadisvara temple at Tirutturaipoondi is also a dancing figure with some difference. He is shown dancing on his right foot with the left leg raised above, the significance of the change in the position of the foot is not clear. His right hand is in suchi hasta while his left is in pracharita hasta. He wears a decorated udara-bandha, a channavira and ornaments on his neck and legs. His jata is arranged in curls.

Appar also known as Tirunavukkarasar was another saint whose images are found in different temples. He was a contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendravarman and was converted to the saiva fold by his sister. His bronze images are found in the standing anjali pose wearing a simple undergarment. The image from the Pudukkottai Museum is shown in tribhanga with a rounded face. A rudraksha beads encircle his head. He is in anjali hasta and his pendulous earlobes are without any ear ornament. He wears a simple undergarment in the ardoruka fashion. He has neck and leg ornaments which are simple and plain. His instrument (axe) for clearing the temple premises is fashioned on his right shoulder.

In another bronze image of Appar, he wears a small kaupina instead of the short undergarment and his instrument is held across his body from the left shoulder to the right thigh. His long legs are gracefully fused with the body. The

left leg is slightly bent to give a graceful attitude.

Sundaramurthy was also known as Nambiyaruran. He was married to Paravai Nachchiyar, a woman from the patiyilar family. At the marriage ceremony Siva performed a miracle. Siva came in the guise of a old man and claimed that Sundaramurthy was his slave. After the miracle Sundaramurthy's marriage with Paravai was performed. Some years later he was again married to another lady, Sangili by name. Therefore the images of Sundaramurthy are found with his consorts. It is interesting to note that with Sundaramurthy his wives were also depicted and find a place in the bronzes.

Two of his images deserve mention. In one image from Nallur he is seen with his first wife Paravai Nachchiyar. He is standing in tribanga with his left leg slightly bent. He has a beautiful rounded face with a pleasing smile on his lips. His hair is arranged in the form of a dammilla. He wears patrakundalas, ornaments on his neck and hand and with a simple yajnopavita. His small undergarment is worn in a ardoruka fashion which is well decorated with flower motifs. His right hand is resting on the left shoulder of Paravai Nachchiyar and his left hand is in kataka hasta. Paravai Nachchiyar, with a slightly rounded face is standing gracefully to his left. She is in tribanga. She wears patrakundala, neck ornaments and armlets. Her lower garment is arranged tastefully upto her ankles. She wears a nupura. Her left hand is in lolahasta.

Another bronze image of Sundaramurthy is from Tirunamallur. This is also in a group in which Sundaramurthy stands in the middle with his two consorts positioned on both the sides. Sundaramurthy has a long face. His left hand is shown resting on something while the right hand is in katihasta. His two wives have round faces with their hair arranged in the dhammilla fashion. Both the wives of Sundaramurthy have on their hands one flower each. All the three stand on a rectangular pita.

A single image of Paravai without her husband Sundaramurthy is from Chidambaram.⁸ According to R. Nagaswamy she is shown in almost dancing pose. The image resembles many figures of Paravai of later Chola period and hence he identifies it with Paravai Nachchiyar. It is of exquisite workmanship. Her left arm is slightly bent in the form of kalyanam hasta. She has a rounded face with a dhammilla type of hair dress.

Manickavasaga was a minister of the Pandya king Varaguna. Due to his intense devotion to Siva he has neglected his work of a minister. The king punished him for his wrong actions. Siva performed miracles and saved the minister from the punishment. Thereupon he sang some soul stirring verses known as Thiruvasagam. These incidents do not figure in his bronze images, instead he was depicted as a teacher since he was also considered as an expounder of the Vedas. Therefore this aspect of a teacher is represented in his images. He is shown in vyakhyana mudra and holding a pustaka or a bundle of palm leaves.

The image of Manickavasaga from Kilapudunur is a good example. He is shown standing on a padmapita with a

rounded face, wearing a heavy yajnopavita. He has a simple undergarment worn in the ardoruka fashion. A second image⁹ of Manickavasaga from Chidambaram belongs to a early Chola period. The standing figure is with a simple kaupina, yajnopavita, and garland of rudraksha beads. His hair is arranged in small curls on the forehead. His right hand is in vyakhyana mudra and his left hand is holding a bundle of palm leaves. Interestingly the palm leaves in the hands of Manickavasaga has an inscription which reads, 'Tiruchirambalpper'.

A third image of of Saint Manickavasaga of a slightly later in date is also from Chidambaram temple. He is also wearing a simple kaupina, rudrakshas and yajnopavita. His right hand is in vyakhyana mudra and his left hand holding a bundle of palm leaves is damaged.

Bronze images of a few other nayanmars are also available for study. Among them we may refer to the image of Siruttondar. He was an ardent devotee of Siva. One day Siva appeared as a Bhairava mendicant and visited the house of Siruttondar. He had to offer the flesh of his only son, Siralan to the Bhairava. Later the boy was brought alive by the miracle of Siva. This final episode was freezed into the bronze. In this group Siruttondar stands on a rectangular pedestal in anjali. His wife Tiruvankattadigal is standing nearby holding the uplifted hand of Siralan with her left hand. This group of images were discovered by the Archaeological Survey of India in their excavation at Darasuram.¹⁰ Interestingly the pedestal has an inscription in Tamil characters of the eleventh century A.D. The name 'Siruttondar' appears on the pedestal. From the same excavation another image of Nayanmar was unearthed.¹¹ This image is identified as the image of Narasingamunaiyariyar on the basis of an inscription found on the pedestal. The inscription is in Tamil characters of the eleventh century A.D. and reads, 'Narasingamunaiyariyar'. He was a chieftain of the Tirumunaiyari area. He is shown standing on a square pedestal with folded hands. He is wearing a rudraksha mala and a simple undergarment.

Karaikkal Ammaiyar was another nayanmar whose images have been modelled in bronze. She was a vaisya woman. She became an ardent devotee at a very young age. She requested god to make her assume the form of a demoness, which was granted. She is depicted in the form of an old woman. The Somanatha temple at Melpadi has a bronze image of Karaikkal Ammaiyar.¹² The hunter, Kannappa Nayanar was another saint who was represented in bronze. He was a son of a hunter chief. On one of his hunting expeditions he realised the devotion to Siva and became a Siva Bakta. He offered animal flesh to Him and was accepted. In many temples Kannappa nayanar image may be found. In the bronze image from Tiruvalangadu he is shown as standing with a bow and arrow and wearing a leafy undergarment and sandals.

All the above images belong to the Chola period (9-13 cent. A.D.) The deification of the saiva devotees and the process of assigning the hierarchy in the religious pantheon could have taken some time. However it is clear that the

*Plate 1 : Sundaramurthy
Nallur,
11th Century A. D.*



*Plate 2 : Sundaramurthy with Paravai,
Nallur,
11th Century A. D.*



Plate 3 : Manikkavachagar,
Chidambaram,
10th Century A. D.

nayanmars, considered as the leaders of the saiva faith were made into deities at least in the early Chola period. The modelling of the images, both in stone and bronze was confirmed to certain broad principles. All the nayanmars were depicted with two hands and in their rustic form. Simplicity was followed in almost all the figures and infact that adds to the beauty of bronzes. Decorative ornaments are very few. The form of depiction always confirm to the episodes mentioned in literature. In the depiction of the four nayanmars some distinctive features were followed.

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South Indian Bronzes through the Ages and their Historical Significance

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The stone-age man of India walked into the Bronze-age around 3000 B. C. and this has been attested to by the discovery of bronze objects of various kind in the Indus Valley Civilization. These objects range from children's rattle to a beautiful, rhythmic dancing girl. Later, the Post Harappan period witnessed the progress of Bronze-age culture throughout North and Central India barring South India, especially, Tamil Nadu. This Bronze-age culture was succeeded by the copper-age culture in the north. Tamil Nadu had not experienced such bronze or copper age cultures but walked straight into the Iron-age from the neolithic age or new stone age. This unique phenomenon has not been felt in other parts of India, lying north of Narmada river. Tamil Nadu has always maintained its identity and remain one of the cradles of advanced civilisation right from the remote past. The absence of bronze age culture in Tamil Nadu is noticed in the several archaeological excavations conducted in the proto and early historic sites in Tamil Nadu. Instead, matured Iron-age culture datable to circa 1000 B.C. has been observed all over Tamil Nadu.

The earliest bronze objects in Tamil Nadu have been reported from the Iron-age burials of Adichchanallur in Tirunelveli district.¹ Very recently another Iron-age site Kodumanal in Periyar District has yielded one or two bronze objects.² The former site may be dated to circa 7th or 6th century B. C., while the latter to around 1st century B. C. These are the notable bronze objects recovered from excavations worth mention. During the period from circa 1000 B. C. to 300 B. C. the whole of Tamil Nadu was experiencing the mature Iron-age culture. Since Iron is stronger and more durable than bronze or copper that the Tamils preferred the former. Further they knew that iron alone was the best suitable metal for making war weapons and therefore Iron became the most prestigious metal of the times. Further Iron was readily and easily available in Tamil Nadu at that time. This explains why bronze has become a rare commodity during the period from 1000 B. C. to 300 B. C. in Tamil Nadu.

Even during the Sangam age also, the Tamils had not made attempts to make use of bronze. This is evidenced from the Sangam literature. During the Sangam age, a large quantity of icons of both religious, and secular characters were made of wood, terracotta and stucco. The Sangam Tamils preferred these perishable materials rather than the imperishable ones like the stone, metal or bronze or alloys of metals. The reason for such preference is inexplicable. But this does not mean that the art of bronze casting or metal casting was altogether unknown to them.

There is a stray reference in Maduraikkanchi³ to the casting of a gold statue of a lady. This suggests that the Sangam Tamils knew the art of metal casting.

The art of bronze casting and production of bronze icons suddenly surface during the Pallava period. Perhaps the Pallava ruler Mahendra Varman I assuming the title *Vichitracitta* (curious minded) claims to have introduced the stone masonry in the art of construction of edifices for the Immortals and he could be also responsible for this sudden spurt of this art in Tamil Nadu.

Pure bronze must be an alloy of copper, brass and lead. These metals are amalgamated in the ratio of 80:18:2 respectively for making the icons. The most common form of Indian Bronze consists of an alloy of copper and tin in the ratio of 10:1.

According to Prof. K. Nilakanta Sastri 'Bronze is a convenient and conventional term for metal images irrespective of the exact number of proportion of metals mixed in the amalgam out of which the images are cast'.⁴ Therefore it may also be presumed that if the above said three metals are mixed in the amalgam then it may be called bronze and if five metals are mixed then the alloy is called '*Panchaloha*'. Both bronze and *panchalohas* were chosen for making icons of various deities in the Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Vijayanagara and Nayak periods.

The period of 300 years from 550 A. D. to 850 A. D. is an important epoch in the fields of Temple art, architecture, sculpture, iconography, religions and rituals. Pallavas being staunch saivites promoted Saivite iconography and the Various forms of Siva drew their attention. Further, the Saivite Nayanmars and Vaishnavite Alvars through their devotional hymns propagated the Bhakti movement. Festivals occupied a pre-eminent position in the mode of worship. During the festival periods, images were required for being taken out for procession. Hence there was a need for processional deities (*Utsavamurtis*) and these were largely made in bronze or copper. Thus the history of the art of bronze casting began and slowly and steadily progressed through centuries to reach a high water mark in the Chola period.

The Pallava bronzes are small and in some cases they are less than one foot high. But during the late 9th Century and 10th Century A. D., bronze icons of fairly bigger size made their appearance. Though there are very few bronzes assignable to the Pallavas they exhibit excellent quality and nice workmanship.

Among the Pallava bronzes, the Somaskanda was the hot favourite and reported from places like Tiruvelangadu



Plate - 1
Bronze Casting - Workspot

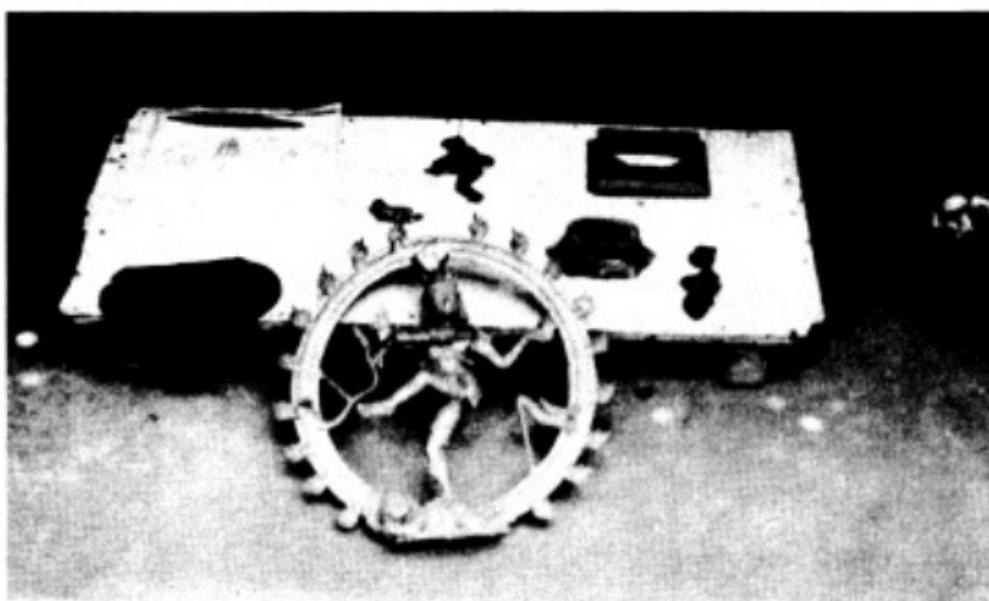


Plate - 2
Bronze Casting - Workspot

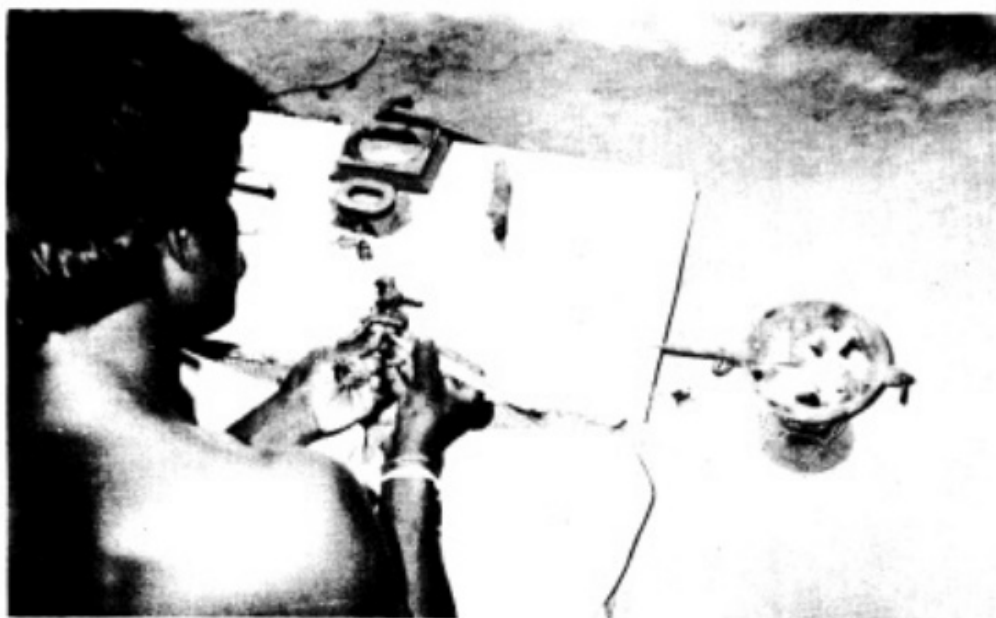


Plate - 3
Modern Sculpture at Work

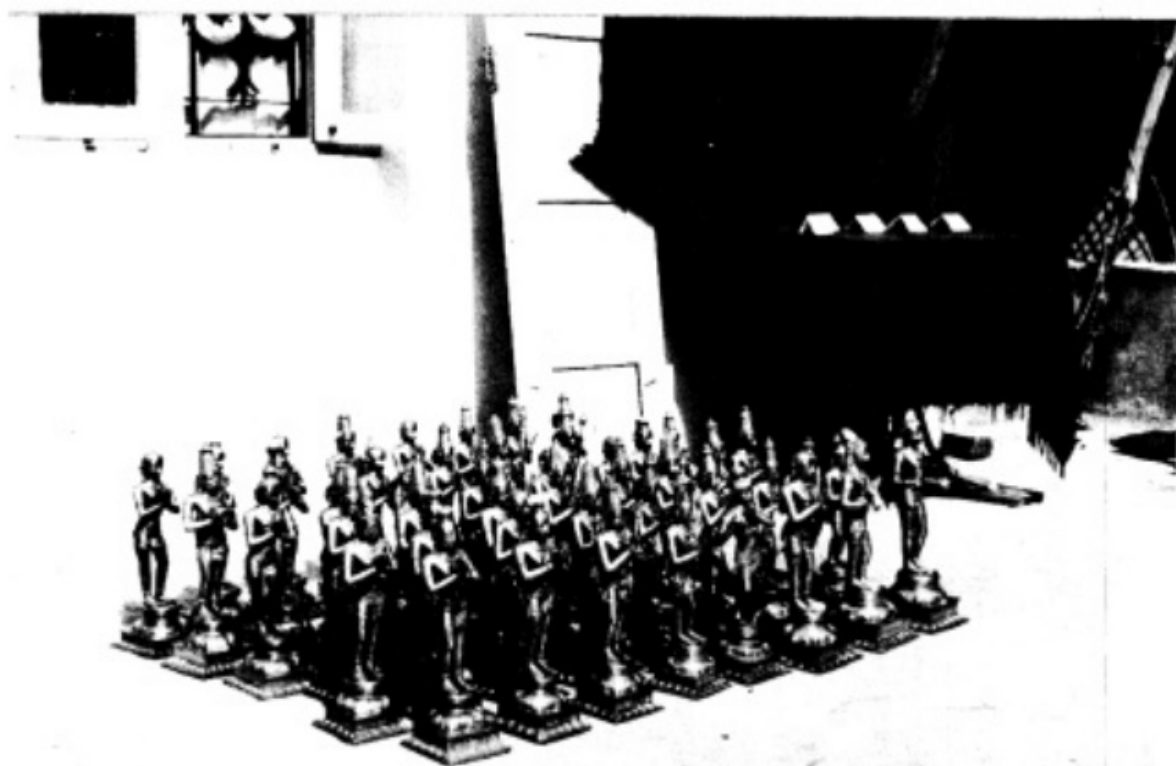


Plate - 4
Sculptor's Workshop,
Sixty Three Nayanmars
Made to Order

(Chengleput District) and Surakkudi. Vishapaharana from Kilapadanur, Tanjore district is yet another figure but considered to be a rare representation in metal. There is another rare piece, representing Nataraja (from Kuram). He carries a snake in his upper arm instead of the usual flames. The Nataraja is in Urdhavanajapose. It may be mentioned here that the austere decoration is the characteristic feature, of the Pallava bronzes and hence it is very helpful to identify them.

The Cholas who succeeded the Pallavas and Pandyas reigned nearly for four centuries. They have extended their conquests to ceylon parts of Bengal, Burma, Malaya and Sumatra. Turning to the art history, it may be said that the Nataraja conception was dear to them and bronze icons of Nataraja were produced on a large scale.

The Chola bronzes, particularly the Nataraja icons are known for their vigorous postures and sublime, spiritual beauty. The masterpieces of this art were produced during the 11th and 12th centuries A. D. and found their way into the various countries. This Art has reached a high water mark during this period.

South Indian Bronzes of both religious and secular characters are exhibited prominently in the Government Museum at Madras. A sizable number may also be seen at the Tanjore Art Gallery and at the various Museums in the different parts of the world.

The Chola rule saw the making of bronze, Natarajas in numbers primarily for worship in temples. The conception of Nataraja was known to the Tamils even before the advent of the Cholas and as evidenced from the description of his basic features in *Silappadhikaram* and other Tamil works of the period. The anklet in the sacred foot of Siva is described as Cevati-C-cilambu; his matted wicks of hair as Cefcadai, etc.

The hymns of Nayanmars also contain numerous references to the dancing Siva; for instance Tirugfiana Sambandar calls him, 'todudaiya Ceviyen tuvenmati cudi.' Therefore these works served as sources of information for the Chola artists and sthaphathis.

The conception of the Divine Dancer and his cosmic significance and the excellence of the Chola artists presentation of the same have won the highest praise from discerning critics including modern sculptors like Rodin.

On the bronzes, Nataraja wears a broad smiles. He smiles at death and at life, at pain and at joy alike. It is even commented that his smile is both death and life, both joy and pain.* This is the philosophical concept of the smile of Nataraj. Likewise each and every aspect of Nataraja hints at philosophical meaning.

Another interesting aspect of the Chola bronzes is that there are a few portraits in bronze; prominent among them is the one of Sembian - Mahadevi.⁶ The pleasing proportions and workmanship tempted the art critics to describe her beauty as 'disturbing'.

The bronzes of Colamadevi, the Queen of Raja Raja I was presented to Kalahasti temple under the instructions from Rajendra and it was executed by the sculptor Nicca Pattalagan. These details are inscribed on the pedestal of the icon.⁷

Another bronze statue of Kulotunga III was gifted to the temple of Kalatti-Udaiyar in Kalahasti. It was gifted by a person Udaiyanambi.⁸ The facial features of the icon exhibit the youthful energy and eagerness of Kulotunga III. It seems to have been made at the time of his accession. It is believed that it is the only authentic contemporary bronze portrait of a Chola ruler.

The bronzes of Raja Raja I and Rajendra I were also made and gifted to the Tanjore temple and at present they are preserved in the temple.

Bronzes of Chieftains and spiritual leaders were also made during this period.

The study of the Chola bronzes of both religious and secular characters throws a flood of light not only on the religious history but also on the political, socio-economic and art history of the Tamils during the period. The inscriptions on the pedestals of the icons shed light on the nature of script and the status of language of the Cholas.

With the fall of the Chola power in the 13th century A. D., the art of bronze casting began to decline. However, under the Vijayanagaras and Nayaks it regained the lost ground for a short span of time.

Regarding the technique of casting bronze icons, it may be said that there are two methods namely solid and hollow. The method is known as 'Cire perdue' meaning lost wax method. In both cases the negatives will be lost when the cast image is released. The Tanjore inscriptions refer to some technical details and the icons which were made solid, hollow or semi-hollow with thick sides; The art of bronze casting has been flourishing as a cottage industry (Plates 1, 2, 3) in some select pockets around Kumbakonam and Madras⁹. The Modern bronzes representing the Hindu deities, mostly in miniature size have a good market both within and outside India. The sixty three nayanmars of miniature size, attract the foreigners and fetch good earnings for the sculptors (Plate 4).

To conclude it may be said that there is a secret hidden behind this wonderful art, i.e. it involves the use of less sophisticated and costly tools and equipment but creates the most sophisticated and costly icons that the international community could ever dream of.

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9. I am thankful to Thiru G. Mohan Sthapathi, Metal sculptor for having thrown open his workshop for taking photographs.

Kurungalisvarar Temple Bronzes – A Study

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The village Koyambedu is situated on the Madras - Poonthamalli High Road near Arumbakkam. It is evident from the inscription of Kulottunga III that Koyambedu was included in Mangattu Nadu, a sub division of Kulottunga Chola Valanadu alias Puliyurkottam in Jayamkonda Chola Mandalam. The inscription also refers the Lord of this Temple as "Koyambettu Udaiya Kurungalandar". In this village, there are three temples constructed for Kurungalisvarar, Vaikundavasapperumal and Samathamman. Among the three temples, Kurungalisvarar temple is very important for its beautiful bronzes and sculptures. On the basis of the Architecture and styles of the sculptures, this temple can be dated to Kulottunga III. This temple mandapas and Kuthirai Mandapa were built during the Vijayanagar period. In the Kosta of the temple Vinayagar, Brahma, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu and Durga sculptures are installed. These sculptures belong to the period of Kulottunga III. Totally 25 bronzes are housed in this temple. Among these bronzes, *Ganesa*, *Pradhoshanayar*, *Somaskandar*, *Natarajar*, *Sivakami*, *Chokkar* and *Samathamman* are most important.

Ganesa:

Most of the Ganesa images are in standing posture, though seated images are also known. The present metal image of Ganesa is a good example for the artistic feature of the Kulottunga III period.

Ganesa is standing on a lotus placed over a square pedestal. On the two sides of the pedestal 'L' type nail provided for Thiruvachchi. Pathasara on the foreleg, and above this, anklet is provided. On the waist portion dress is shown. Over this, the waist band falling into small 'U' in between the thighs. This Ganesa image may be compared with the Ganesa image of Nedungudi, Kailasanatha temple, in Thanjavur District (now kept in Thyagaraja temple, Thiruvavur, A. D. 1200).

Thick udarabhanda is represented. Above this yagnopavita is running in three division. 'Brahma knot' is shown on the left chest. Two necklaces are adorning his neck. On the shoulders Vahumalai is running. The four arms carry the axe and the broken tusk in the upper and lower right, pasa and a laddu in the upper and lower left. Single bangle is represented in each forearm. The trunk is fairly long and turned to the left into 'V' shape. Karanta makuta, above the two ears, flower is shown. On the back of the head sirachakra is

represented. It measures 40 cms. height and 25 cm. breadth. This may be dated to 13th century A.D.

Samathamman:

Samathamman is seated on Vrithapita in the royal pose. This magnificent figure of Kali represents both quietitude and anger, blessing with her lower right hand (abhaya pose), holding cup in her lower left hand and with the upper right hand holding sula and with the upper left hand holding pasa. She wears two necklaces and tali on her neck. Her upavita is made of skulls running from her left side shoulder to right side waist. On her left ear patrakundala and narakundala on her right. The eyebrows are raised and the oval shaped eyes contribute to the general fierceness of impression, further enhanced by a swelling at the root of the nose and closed lips with protruding teeth. Her flaming hair stands erect at the back of the head. On the flaming hair, crescent moon and snake are shown. On the head, kabala and snake are represented. Pathasaram on her legs and garment on her waist. Breast band is not shown. It measures 42 cm. height and 28 cm. breadth. It may be dated to 14th century A.D.

Parveta Chokkanathar:

This kind of bronzes are very rare in temple worship. Chokkar is generally represented seated on horse back. But here Chokkanathar is standing on the Vrithapita, with his left leg little forward. Pathasaram is shown on the legs and the garment is worn from waist to thigh. The waist bands fall into a small 'pa' in between the thigh. The left hand bend slightly on the elbow portion, right hand is raised above the shoulders, representing the riding pose on a horse back. But horse is not shown. Two necklaces on his neck portion and the two ears are elongated. On the head, hairs are bundled and represented as 'Kondai'. On the two hands, two bangles are shown. Eyebrows are clearly shown and the ornaments on the forehead are shown. It measures 60 cm. height and 30 cm. breadth. Dated to 14th century A.D.

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2. Kalittogai : 2 : 4
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5. Appar Tevaram: Tirugokarnam, Verse 5

Fig. 1 : *Ganesa,
Kurungalisvarar Temple,
Koyambedu,
13th Century A. D.*



Fig. 2 : *Samathamman,
Kurungalisvarar Temple,
Koyambedu,
13-14th Century A. D.*



*Fig. 2 : Parveta Chokkanathar,
Kurungalisvarar Temple,
Koyambedu,
13-14th Century A. D.*

Dated Bronze of Tiruvanaikka

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There are innumerable historical temples in Tamil Nadu. The Siva temple known as Jambukesvaram at Tiruvanaikka is one of such temples situated in Trichy Taluk of the Trichy District. Tiruvanaikka is a part of Uraiyur which was the capital city of the Sangam Cholas. It is understood that Uraiyur was held as the capital city by the Chola King Karikal Peruvallathan. One of his descendants was Kochengannan. The life of Kochengannan is connected with the temple of Jambukesvaram of Tiruvanaikka. Tirumangaialvar praises Kochengannan in his hymns as follows:-

"என் தெனீசரிக்கு ஏழிய மடம் எழுபது செய்
துலகாண்ட செய்க ணான் கோச் சோழன்"

The history of Tiruvanaikka temple can be traced back from the Sangam age. This temple might have been built by perishable materials like wood and mortar during the Sangam period. A fragmentary stone inscription found lying on the floor of the inner prakara of this temple refers to Maduraikonda Parakesari i.e. Parantaka I. On the basis of legends and the literary references we can conclude that the temple of Jambukesvaram was in existence from the period of Kochengannan. This temple was converted into stone in the early Chola period. There are three sculptures of Brahma, Ardhanarisvara and Dakshinamurti.

These sculptures belong to the early Chola period of 9th - 10th Century A.D. They are housed at the Mandapa of Jambukesvaram temple at Tiruvanaikka. It is believed that these sculptures were removed from the original structure during the renovation made by Nagarattar in the 19th Century which might have been in existence in 9th-10th Century A.D. The style of the sculptures recalls the sculptures of Palur, Allur, Tiruchendurai and Lalgudi in Trichy District.

This temple possesses a number of beautiful bronzes and one of them is very interesting and noteworthy. The name of the bronze is Palliarai Chokkar. It bears an inscription on Padmapita in Tamil and Grantha characters. The inscription reads as follows:

Isvara Varusam Karatigai
Madham Ayndu Tedi Krishna deva
Maharayar Dhammatile

Govindha Annka
Thambi Ganapati Sadasevai

The original in Tamil inscription is as follows:

விஸ்வரூபம் ஐந்தி கரத்தகை
மாதம் ௫ ௨ சூ. ஜ. ௧௨௨
௨௨௦௦ ஜயா தரித்தலை
௧௨௦௦ நித்த பூணா க-
தூமரடி ணபதி ஸதாரமஸை

It refers to the endowment of this bronze by one Ganapati, brother of Govindha on 5th of Kartikai of the cyclic year Isvara which is corresponding to 1517 A.D. for the merit of his overlord Krishnadeva Maharayar.

Krishnadeva Maharayar, the Vijayanagar King ruled from 1509 to 1529 A.D. During his reign Tamil Nadu was under his sway. He is one of the famous kings of Tuluva dynasty of Vijayanagar Kingdom. He defeated the Kadavas and captured Kanchi. He erected Gopuras at the temples at Kanchipuram, Chidambaram and Tiruvannamalai. The portraits of his and his consorts made of copper are being preserved in Tirupati temple. Though he cherished Vaishnavism and he liberally donated to the growth of Saivism also. As he was patronising Saivism the above bronze image was donated to the temple of Jambukesvaram.

Description of the Bronze

Palliarai Chokkar is seated on Padmasana with the left leg bent and crossed and the right by hanging down. He has four hands. His upper left hand carries an antelope while his upper right hand carries an axe. His lower left hand is in varada pose while the lower right hand is in Abaya pose. He wears makarakundalas in his ears and jatakakuta on his head. His face is somewhat round with prominent noses with nicely opened eyes. Forehead of the bronze is obliterated due to the application of sandal paste after sacred bath. The height of the bronze is 41 cms. and its width is 20 cms in between upper two hands.

Photograph - Courtesy, by the State Department of Archaeology



*Dated Bronze Image of
Palliakai Chokkar - 1517 A. D.*

கரணக் காவியங்கள்

★ செல்வி. கல்பகம் வே. இராமன், பி.டி. (நுன்கலை)

★★ செல்வி. கு. நளினி, எம்.டி., எம்.பி.லி., டி.டி.டி.

பாக்ஸ் இரா. கலைக்கோவன், எம்.பி.பி.எம்., டி.டி., எம்.டி.

இயக்குநர், பாக்ஸ். ஈ. இராசாணிக்கனார் வரலாற்றாய்வு மையம், திருச்சிராப்பள்ளி-620 017

தமிழகத்தின் கலையாற்றல் பெருமைகளை இந்த மன்னலின் மரபுரிமைகளாய் எழுந்து நிற்கும் திருக்கோயில் வளாகங்கள், திகழும் சிற்பங்களாலும், எழிலார் கோலங்களில் எழுந்தருளியுள்ளபட்டிருக்கும் செப்புத் திருமேனிகளாலும் மெய்ப்பித்து மகிழ்கின்றன. நின்ற, இருந்த, கிடந்த, மற்றும் தவழும் கோலங்களில் ஆயிரக்கணக்கான செப்புத் திருமேனிகள் பல்லவர் காலத்தொட்டு தற்காலம் வரை தமிழகத்து வார்ப்பறிஞர்களால் கலை நயமும் கற்பனை நலமும் மீளிர உருவாக்கப்பட்டு வந்துள்ளன. இந்தத் திருமேனிகள் நிலைப்பு, இயக்கம் என்ற இரண்டு அமைவுகளில் கண்கவர் அழகுடனும் ஆகமச் செறிவுடனும் வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ளன. ஆகமங்களை மீறிய வடிவங்களாகவும் சில உருப்பெற்றுள்ளன.

இயக்க நிலை காட்டும் செப்புத் திருமேனிகள் பெரும்பாலும் ஆடல் வடிவங்களாகவே அமைந்துள்ளன. இவற்றுள் ஆடவல்லான் தலையாய திருக்கோலமாகும். இது காணப்பெறாத சைவத் திருக்கோயில் அம்பலங்களே இருக்க முடியாது என்னுமளவு எங்கும் இடம் பெற்ற இந்த ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவ அழகுக்கோலம் சகனாதிகாரத்தில் புஜங்கதராசிதம் என்றழைக்கப்படுகிறது. புஜங்கதராசிதம் பரதரால் நாட்டிய சாத்திரத்தில் பட்டியலிடப்படும் நூற்றியெட்டுக் கரணங்களுள் ஒன்றாகும். பாம்போடு தொடர்புடைய மூன்று கரணங்களில் இதுவும் ஒன்று. இந்த புஜங்கதராசித கரணத்தில் இறைவன் ஆடும் ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவம் பொதுவாக முயலகன் மீதா அல்லது தாமரைத் தளத்தின் மீதாதான் அமையும். ஆனால் வழக்கத்திற்கு மாறாக, எங்குமில்லாப் புதுமையாய், இறைவனின் புஜங்கதராசிதம் புஜங்கத்தின் மீத, அதாவது பாம்பின் மீத நடைபெறும் அற்புதத்தைத் திருவாசி மாற்றுவை வரதீசுவரர் கோயில் சிறைப்பிடித்துள்ளது.

திருச்சியிலிருந்து பத்து கிலோ மீட்டர் தொலைவில் அமைந்துள்ள இக்கோயில், சம்பந்தர், கொல்லி மழவன் மகளின் முயலகன் நோயைப் பாடலால் நலப்படுத்திய இடமாகும். இங்கு இடம் பெற்றுள்ள பாம்பின் மீதாடும் பரமனின் திருமேனி ஆகம இலக்கணங்களை யும், புராண விளக்கங்களையும் மீறிய வடிவமாய் அமைந்துள்ளது. இறைவனது வலத்திருவடியின் கீழே

பாம்பின் தலை, பாதத்தின் வழி உடலின் எடை முழுவதும் அழுத்துவதால் தலை நசுக்குற்று இலேசாய் வாய்பிளந்த நிலை. மிதி தாளாமல் உடற்பகுதி வளைந்து, இறைவனின் வலத் திருக்காலின் பின்புறம் சுற்றியேறி, முழங்காலுக்குப் பின்புறம் வால் நுனிநெளிய நிற்கிறது. இறைவனின் இடக்கால் வழக்கமான வலப்புற வீச்சில் கைகள் ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவக் கோலத்திற்கே உரிய வேழ, காப்பு முத்திரைகளில் அழிக்கவும் ஆக்கவும் நெருப்பும் உடுக்கையும் மேற்கைகளில் சிரிப்பு சிந்திடும் விசாரக் இதழ்களில் ஆணவம் அழித்த பெருமீதம், விழிகளின் திறப்பிலோ வணங்க வைக்கும் மெய்மை.

பாம்பின் மீது பரமன் ஆடியதாஃப் புராணங்களிலோ, இலக்கியங்களிலோ தகவல் இல்லை. இப்படி ஒரு படிம வகையை ஆகமங்களும் காட்டவில்லை. விஷ்ணுவின் காளிங்கநர்த்தனம் மட்டுமே நமக்குத் தெரிந்த நிலையில், கோடுகளைத் தாண்டிய கோலமாய், ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவச் செப்புத் திருமேனிகளுள் ஒர் அதிசய நிலையாய், பாம்பு நித்தன சிவனாய் இதை உருவாக்கிய வார்ப்பறிஞரின் எண்ணம் எதுவாக இருக்க முடியும் என்ற கேள்வி எழுந்தது. திருவரங்கத் திலும் திருச்செந்துறையிலும் அதற்கு விடை கிடைத்தது.

திருவரங்கத்து வெள்ளைக் கோபுர அடித்தளத்தில் விஷ்ணுவின் திருமேனியொன்று சங்குசக்கரங்களுடன் ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவம் ஆடுகிறது. இதேபோன்ற திருமேனி பலித்தன மேற்கு முகப்பிலும் உள்ளது. திருச்செந்துறை அருள்மிகு சந்திரசேகரர் திருக்கோயில் கோபுர முதல் நிலையிலும் ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவராய் விஷ்ணு காட்சியளிக்கிறார். இம்மூன்று இடங்களிலுமே ஆடல், பாம்பின் மீதுதான் சிவபெருமானுக்கே உரிய ஆனந்தத் தாண்டவம் விஷ்ணுவுக்கு அளிக்கப்பட்டதே? திருவாசிக் கேள்வி திருவரங்கத்திலும் திருச்செந்துறையிலும் எதிரொலித்தது.

பிற்காலச் சோழர் ஆட்சியின் இறுதிக் கட்டத்தில் தமிழகத்தில் சமயச் சண்டைகளும், சாதிப் பூசல்களும் பெருகி மலிந்ததைக் கவ்வெட்டுகள் தக்க சான்றுகளுடன் மெய்ப்பிக்கின்றன. அமைதியிழந்த பூங்காவாய் தமிழகம் தத்தளித்த நிலையில் சமய ஒருமைப்பாட்டுணர்வை உண்டாக்கி மக்களிடையே நல்விணக்கத்தை வளர்க்க

* ஆய்வு மாணவர், வரலாற்றாய்வு மையம்

★★ கவ்வெட்டாய்வாளர், வரலாற்றாய்வு மையம்

திருவாலங்காடு
விஷ்ணு கிராந்தம்



கொடுமுடி மகுடேசுவரர்
கோயில் சதுர கரணர்

விரும்பிய கற்றார் சிலர் சிற்பாசிரியர்களின் உதவியோடு இதுபோன்ற சமயப் பொதுவான திருமேனிகளை உருவாக்கியிருக்க வேண்டும். சைவ, சாக்த ஒருமைப் பாட்டுக்கு அம்மையப்பரும், சைவ வைணவ ஒருமைப் பாட்டுக்கு அரிஅரரும் உதவினாற்போல், பதினான்காம் நூற்றாண்டில் ஆளந்தத் தாண்டவ விஷ்ணுவும் பாம்பின் மீதாடும் பரமனும் சச்சரவு நிறைந்த சூழலில் அமைதி காண உதவியிருக்கலாம். அழகுக்காக என்று மட்டும் அல்லாமல் அறிவு பூர்வமாகவும் செப்புத் திருமேனிகளை உருவாக்கிய நாடு தமிழ்நாடு.

ஆளந்தத் தாண்டவம் நிகழ்ந்தபோது இறைவனின் இந்த ஆடல் வயத்துக்கு இசையம் கூட்டிய கலைப் பெருமக்களைப் புராணங்கள் காட்டுகின்றன. சிற்பங்கள் காட்டுகின்றன. சில வார்ப்புத் திருமேனிகளும் இசையாடல் வடிவங்களாய் வடிவம் பெற்றுள்ளன. தஞ்சை மாவட்டத்திலுள்ள செந்தலை சுந்தரேசுவரர் திருக்கோயிலில் உள்ள ஆளந்தத் தாண்டவப் படிமத்தின் தளத்தில், திருவாசி முடியும் இடங்களில் பக்கத்திற்கொன்றாய் இரண்டு பூதகணங்கள் காட்சியளிக்கின்றன. வலப்புறக் கணத்தின் இடப்புறக்கை வியப்பு மகிழ்வும் நிறைந்த பேராளந்த நிலையில் இறைவனின் ஆடலைப் போற்றிப் பரவ, வலக்கை, இரண்டு கால்களுக்கும் இடையில் இருத்தப் பட்டுள்ள சூழகக்குடமுழுவின் தலைப் பகுதியைத் தட்டி இசையெழுப்புகிறது. இடப்புறக் கணம் இரண்டு கைகளாலும் ஆடல் அசைவுகளுக்குப் பொருத்த அழகாய்த் தாளமிசைத்தபடி, மலர்ந்த முகத்தோடு, மெய்மறந்த நிலையில் காட்சியளிக்கிறது.

இதே போன்ற வடிவங்கள் மேலப் பெரும்பள்ளத்திலும் தீர்த்தகரி சிவக்கொழந்தீசுவரர் திருக்கோயிலிலும் உள்ளன. தீர்த்தகரி திருமேனியில் இசைக் கலைஞர்களுக்கு நான்கு கைகள். இருவரும் பின்னிரு கைகளால் இறைவனின் ஆடலைச் சுட்டிக்காட்டி இதனினும் பேறு வேறில்லை என்பது போல் வியந்து மகிழ்ந்தபடி முன்னிருகைகளால் சூழமுழுவையும், தாளத்தையும இயக்கி ஆடலுக்கேற்ற இசை வழங்குகிறார்கள். இந்தத் திருமேனிகளின் அமைப்பழகம், இவற்றின் முகமெய்ப்பாடுகளும் அற்புதமானவை. சோழர் காலத்தில் எழுந்த இந்த சுந்தரப் படிமங்கள் தமிழகத்துச் செப்புப்படிம வரலாற்றின் மைல் கற்களாகும்.

வைத்தீசுவரன் கோயில் படிமத்தில் கணங்களுக்குப் பதிலாய் முனிவர்கள் இசைக் கலைஞர்களாய் காட்டப் பட்டுள்ளனர். நீண்ட தாடியும் சடாமுடி களுமாய்க் காட்சியளிக்கும் இவர்களுள் வலப்புறம் இருப்பவர் சூழமுழா வாசிக்க, இடப்புறம் இருப்பவர் வீணை வாசிக்கிறார். தாளத்துக்குப் பதிலாய் இந்த ஆடவல்லான் படிமம் வீணையைக் கொண்டிருப்பது புதுமையும் சிறப்புமான தொரு மாற்றமாகும். தோளில் சாய்த்துக் கையிலேந்திய வீணையுடன், தான் எழுப்பும் இசைக்குத் தானே மயங்கியவராய் இறைவனின் ஆடலில் எழும் களிப்புப் பேரலைகளில் சிக்கித் தடுமாறும் சித்தத்தினராய்க் காட்சியளிக்கும் இம்முனிவரின் எழிலார்ந்த

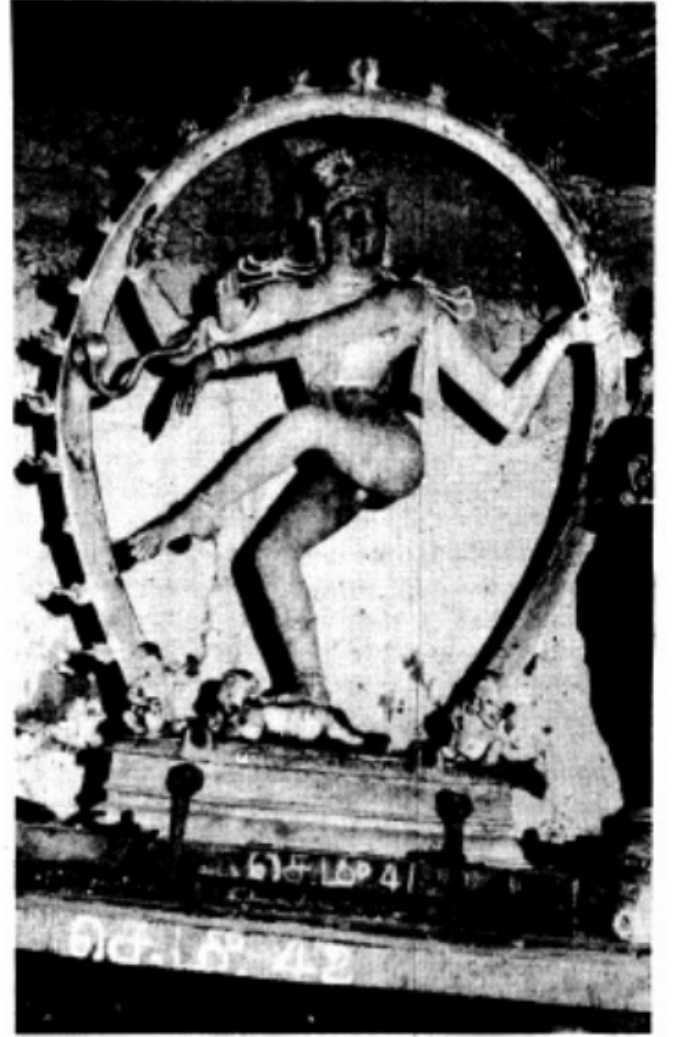
வடிவம், ஆடவல்லான் படிமக் கலையிலோர் வரவேற்கத்தக்க புதுமைச் சிந்தனையாய் மலர்ந்துள்ளது. திருச்சியிலுள்ள பூலோக நாதசாமி திருக்கோயிலில் காணப்படும் ஆடவல்லான் பிற்பட்ட காலத்தது என்றாலும் உடனிருக்கும் கலைஞர்களால் சிறப்புக் குரியதாகிறது. இறைவன் ஆடும் தாமரைத் தளத்திற்குச் சற்று கீழுள்ள தளத்தில் வலப்புறம் தாளமேந்திய கைகள் இசையெழுப்பப் பாடும் மெய்ப்பாட்டில் காரைக்கால் அம்மை இடப்புறம் குடமுழவு நந்திகேசுவரர் இறைவனின் திருவடி நிழலில் இருந்தபடி அவன் ஆடலைக் காண்பதே அகமகிழ்வுட்டும் செயலென்று கைதொழுது வேண்டிய அம்மை, அந்த அரளார் ஆடலுக்கே இசையெழுப்புபவராய் இங்கு இடம் பெற்றுவிட்ட சிறப்பை என்னென்பது! ஆடவல்லான் செப்புத் திருமேனிகளில் அம்மையைக் காண்பது மிக மிக அரிய நிலையாகும். திருச்சிக்கு அந்தப் பெருமையை இலக்கியம் கற்ற வார்ப்பறிஞர் ஒருவர் வழங்கி மகிழ்ந்திருக்கிறார்.

வடிவ வகையிலோ சிந்தனை நிலையிலோ எந்தப் புதிய இணைப்பும் இல்லாமல், அளவாலும் அமைப்பாலும் மட்டுமே புகழ்பெற்றுவிட்ட ஆளந்தத் தாண்டவப் படிமத்தைத் திருநல்லத்து உமைக்கு நல்லவன் கோயில் கொண்டுள்ளது. கோனேரிராசபுரத்து உமாமகேசுவரர் கோயிலென்று இன்றழைக்கப்படும் இத்திருக்கோயிலின் தனியறையில் எழுந்தருளியுள்ள இந்த மிகப்பெரிய ஆடவல்லான் வடிவம் சோழர் காலத்துக் கைவண்ணமாகும். 1.78 மீட்டர் உயரமும், 1.45 மீட்டர் அகலமும் உள்ள இதுபோன்ற திருக்கோலம் தமிழகத்தில் வேறெந்தத் திருக்கோயிலிலும் இல்லையெனலாம். இந்த மேனியின் கைகால் வீச்சுக்களும், உடலின் அசைவுகளும் இடுப்பின் திருப்பலும், பார்க்கப் பார்வைகளைப் பூக்க வைப்பவை. மிகத் தேர்ந்த வார்ப்பறிஞரின் கைகளில், மிகநேயமான மனிதர்களின் அரவணைப்பில் மட்டுமே இதுபோன்ற அற்புதங்கள் உருவெடுக்க முடியும்.

இறைவன் நூற்றியெட்டுத் தாண்டவங்களை நிகழ்த்தியதாய்க் கூறும் ஆகமங்கள் அவற்றை விளக்கும் முயற்சிகளை மேற்கொள்ளவில்லை. சிற்ப ரத்னா பதினொரு வகைகளைக் காட்டத் தத்துவ நிதி ஏழு தாண்டவங்களை மட்டும் விளக்குவது போல் விளக்கி விலகிக் கொள்கிறது. ஆளந்தத் தாண்டவ அச்சுக் களிலேயே ஆடவல்லாணைத் தந்துவந்து வார்ப்பறிஞர்களுள் சிலர் புதிய ஆடற்கோலங்களில் இறைவனைக் காண விழைந்தார்கள். அவர்களுக்குக் கைகொடுத்து உதவியது பரதரின் நாட்டிய நன்னூல்.

தாண்டவ லட்சணத்தைப் பின்பற்றிப் பல்லவ, சோழ ஆடற்பெண்கள் கரணக் காரிகைகளாய் நாட்டியம் வளர்த்தனர். கோயில்களிலும், தனிச்சேரிகளிலும் பட்டுப் பாதங்களால் நிலத்தைத் தொட்டும் தொடாமலும் அவர்கள் காட்டிய கால் நிலைகளும், அசைத்தும் உயர்த்தியும் வளைத்தும் நெகிழ்த்தியும் அழகை வெளிப்படுத்திய கை நிலைகளும், இரண்டையும்

செந்தலை
சுந்தரேசுவரர் கோயில்
ஆடவல்லாள்



கோனேரிராசபுரம்
உமைக்குரல்லவர் கோயில்
ஆடவல்லாள்

இணைத்து ஒன்றாய்க் காட்டிய உடல் நிலைகளும், பார்க்க நேர்ந்த சிற்பாசிரியர்களையும் வார்ப்பறிஞர்களையும் புதிய நோக்கில் சிந்திக்கவும், புதிய வார்ப்புகளை உருவாக்கவும் வழிகாட்டின. அந்த பாதையில் மலர்ந்த அழகுக் கோலங்களுள் ஒன்றுதான் ஊர்த்வஜாநு.

உயர்த்தப்பட்ட முழங்கால் என்பதே ஊர்த்வஜாநு என்பதன் பொருள். பாதத்தைக் குஞ்சிதமாக அமைத்துக் காலை முழங்காலளவில் மடக்கி, மடக்கிய முழங்காலை மார்பளவு உயர்த்துவதுதான் ஊர்த்வஜாநு கரணத்திற்குப் பரதர் காட்டும் இலக்கணம். கைகளுக்குத் தளிக் குறிப்பெதுவும் சொல்லப்படவில்லை. உயர்த்தப்படும் முழங்கால் மார்பளவு இருக்க வேண்டும் என்று கரண இலக்கணம் கூறியபோதும், வடிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள சிற்பங்களும், வாரிக்கப்பட்டுள்ள திருமேனிகளும் இடுப்பளவு உயர்த்திய முழங்காலுடன்தான் காட்சியளிக்கின்றன. இதை இக்கரணத்தின் இடைப்பட்ட நிலையாகக் கொள்ளலாம்.

சென்னை அருங்காட்சியகத்தில் கூடும் நடுசராய்ப்பட்டம் கட்டப்பட்டுள்ள பல்லவர் காலப் படிமத்தான் ஊர்த்வஜாநு செப்புத் திருமேனிகளுள் காலத்தால் பழமை யானது. இப்படிமத்தில் இறைவனின் இடக்கால் உயர்த்தப்பட்டுள்ளது. வலப்பாதம் முயல்களின் மீது முன்னங்கைகளும் வலப்பின் கையும் ஆடவல்லான் தோற்றத்திற்கே உரிய நிலைகளில் அமைய, இடுப்பின் கையில் மட்டும் மாறுதலாய்ப் பாம்பு இடுப்பைச் சுற்றி இழுத்துக்கட்டப்பட்டுள்ள ஆடையின் நேர்த்தியும், அதன் முடிச்சுகளும் இது செப்புத் திருமேனிதான் என்று வியக்க வைக்கின்றன. குறைவில்லாத அனிகலன் களுடன், சற்றே நீண்ட முகத்தை இலேசாய் இடப்புறம் திருப்பியவராய் இவராலும் இந்த இனிய கரணக் கோலத்தில், சோழர் காலப் படிமமொன்றும் கிடைத்துள்ளது.

மயிலாடுதுறைவிலுள்ள ஆளந்தத் தாண்டவபுரத்து அருள்மிகு பஞ்சவாமசர் திருக்கோயிலில் உள்ள ஊர்த்வஜாநு கரணர் சோழர் காலத்து இமயச் சாதனை. மண்டல நிலையில் கால்களை அமைத்துப், பின் ஊர்த்வஜாநுவாய் ஒரு காலை உயர்த்தும்போது ஏற்படும் உடல்நிலை அசைவு மாற்றங்களை அணு அணுவாய்ப் படித்தறிந்த பிறகே இந்த வார்ப்புத் திருமேனியை உருவாக்கியிருப்பார்களோ என்று வியக்க வைக்குமளவு அமைப்பு முறையில் அத்தனை அங்க சுத்தம். கைகளின் வீச்சும், இடக்காலின் தூக்கலும், அதற்கேற்ப வலப்புறம் சற்றே சரியும் இடுப்பும், வலப்புறம் சாய்ந்து இடப்புறம் திரும்பிய முகமும் இந்த நிலைப்புக் காட்சியிலும் இயக்கச் செறிவுகளை என்னமாய்க் காட்டுகின்றன! ஊமத்தம்பூவும் கொக்கிரகும் சூடி அள்ளி முடித்த சடாமகுடமும், வலச்செவி நீள் செவியாக இடச்செவியில் பனயோலைக் குண்டலம் கொண்டு இலேசாய்ச் சிரித்த இதழ்களுடன் விளங்கும் திருமுகமும், இந்தத் திருமேனியின் அழகை மேன்மேலும்

கூட்டுகின்றன.

பல்லவ, சோழர் படிமங்கள் இடமுழங்காலை உயர்த்தி ஊர்த்வஜாநு காட்ட, தற்காலப் படிமம் ஒன்று வல முழங்காலை உயர்த்தி உள்ளது. சீனிவாச நல்லூர் குரங்குநாதர் கோயிலில் உள்ள பராந்தகன் காலத்து மாலாஸ்தானத்து ஊர்த்வஜானரை தனக்கு முன்னோடியாய்க் கொண்டுவிட்ட இந்தச் செப்புத் திருமேனி, தமிழகத்து வார்ப்புக்கலை இன்னமும் வாழ்ந்து கொண்டிருப்பதற்குச் சரியான சான்றாகி நிற்கிறது. இறைவன் தாண்டவமாய் ஊர்த்வஜாநு காட்ட, அதையே சுருமாரப் பிரயோகமாய், வாஸ்ய நிலையில் இறைவி எதிரொலித்தால் அது இப்படித் தானிருக்கும் என்பதுபோல் புதிய வார்ப்புகள் இரண்டு பூம்புகாரில் உள்ளன. இங்கே இறைவன் இடமுழங்கால் உயர்த்தி ஊர்த்வஜாநுவில் கைகளில் மாறுதலாய்ப் பரசுவும் மாணும். வலமுன்கை காப்பாற்றுவேன் என்று உறுதிசூற, இடமுன்கை வதாவாய் துவள்கிறது. இறைவியின் முகத்தில் நானம் கொஞ்சுகிறது. இவரிடம் கற்றதை இவருக்கே ஆடிக்காட்டுவதா? இடக்கையில் கூகம் நளினமாய் முத்திரைமிட, வலக்கை வேழக்கையாய் இடப்புற வீச்சில், வல முழங்கால் கரண இலக்கணம் காட்டி மெல்ல உயர, இடக்கால் தாமரைத் தளத்தில், சாய்வுக்கோலமும், உடலின் சரிவுகளும், அளவாய் அழகாய் அமைந்த மார்பகங்களும், தமிழகத்துப் படிமக்கலை வளர்ச்சியின் சரியான பரிணாமங்கள்.

ஆடலுக்கான பாத நிலைகளில் உத்கட்டிதம் ஒன்று. இதைக் குட்டிதம் என்றும் சொல்வர். விரல்களைத் தரையில் படியவைத்துக் குதிங்காலை மட்டும் உயர்த்தித் துட்டுதல் உத்கட்டிதம். இந்தப் பாதநிலையோடு பரதரால் விவரிக்கப்படும் கரணங்களுள் லலிதமும் சதுரமும் முக்கியமானவை. இவ்விரண்டிற்கும் பாதநிலை ஒன்றுதான் என்றாலும், சதுரத்திற்கான இலக்கண வரையறை, குட்டித நிலையில் அமைய வேண்டிய பாதம் வலப் பாதமே என்று வலியுறுத்துகிறது. லலிதத்தில் குட்டிதக்கால் எதுவாகவும் இருக்கலாம். பரதரின் வரையறைகளைப் படித்தறிந்தும் அந்த வரிசையையொட்டி செய்யப்படும் கரணக் கோவைகளைப் பார்த்தறிந்தும் பட்டறிவு பெற்ற வார்ப்பறிஞர்கள், மூன்று திருமேனிகளை உருவாக்கினர். சோழர் காலத்தில் உருவாக்கப்பட்ட இந்த மூன்று செப்புத் திருமேனிகளும் அறிஞர்கள் சிலரை அடையாளக் குழப்பத்தில் ஆழ்த்தியுள்ளன.

திருவரங்குளத்தில் ஒன்றும், திருச்சி வயலூரில் ஒன்றும், கொடுமுடி மகுடேசர் கோயிலில் ஒன்றுமாய்ப் பிறந்த இந்தத் திருமேனிகளுள் முதலாவது இன்று தில்லி தேசிய அருங்காட்சியகத்துக்குக் குடிபெயர்த்துள்ளது. இந்தத் திருமேனியை சதுரர் என்கிறார் திரு. சி. சிவராமமூர்த்தி. மண்டல நிலையில் கால்கள் அமைய, வலப்பாதம் முயல்கள் மீது முழுவதுமாய்ப் பொருத்திய நிலையில் பார்க்கவகமாய்த் திருப்பப்பட்டுள்ளது. வலக் குதிங்காலை ஒட்டி இடப்பாதம்

விஷ்ணு சிராந்தம்
பூம்புகார் (தற்காலம்)



புதிய வார்ப்புகள்
ஊர்த்வஜாநு
பூம்புகார் (தற்காலம்)

உள்ளது. இதன் விரல்கள் முயல்கள் மீது ஒட்டியிருக்க குதிங்கால் உயர்த்தப்பட்டுள்ளது. இப்பாத நிலையே உத்கட்டிதம். இடப் பாதம் உத்கட்டிதமாய் இருக்கும் இது எப்படி சதுரமாக முடியும்? இதுபோன்ற குழப்பங்கள் பின்னாளில் ஆடுவோர்க்கும் அறிஞர்க்கும் வந்துவிடக்கூடாதென்றுதான் சதுரத்தில் வலப்பாதமே குட்டிதமாய் இருத்தல் வேண்டும் என்று பரதர் மிகத்தெளிவாக வலியுறுத்திச் சொல்லியிருக்கிறார். எந்தப் பாதமும் குட்டிதமாக அமையலாமென்ற லலித இலக்கணத்தில் பொருந்தும் திருவரங்குளத்தாரை சதுரர் என்பது எப்படிப் பொருந்தும்?

சதுரர், வயலூரிலும் கொடுமுடியிலும் கொலுவிருக்கிறார். வலக்கால் குட்டிதமாய் அமைய இடக்கால், இரண்டிலுமே பார்க்கவந்தான். வீசிய வேழக்கையும், குட்டித வலக்காலும், வயலூர் படிமத்தைவிட, கொடு முடிப் படிமத்தில் உடலின் உயிர்ப்பான அசைவுகளுக்கு அதிக இடம் கொடுத்து அமைந்துள்ளன. அழகின் உச்சங்களாய்க் காட்சி தரும் இந்தச் செப்புச்சாதனைகள் சோழர்கால வார்ப்பறிஞர்களின் கைவண்ணத்திலெழுந்த திறனார்ந்த தோற்றங்கள். திரு. சிவராமமூர்த்தி இவற்றை லலித கரணப் படிமங்களாய்க் கருதுகிறார். எந்தப் பாதமும் குட்டிதமாகலாம் என்ற லலித இலக்கணப்படி இது பொருந்துமென்றாலும், வலக்காலைக் குட்டித மாக்கி அடையாளம் காட்டியுள்ள வார்ப்பறிஞரின் புத்திசாலித்தனத்தை எப்படித் தள்ளுவது?

திரிவிக்கிரமரின் கதையையொட்டி 'விஷ்ணுவின் அடி' என்ற பொருள் பட தாண்டவ லட்சணத்தில் இடம்பெற்ற கரணந்தான் விஷ்ணுகிராந்தம். இதில் ஒரு கால் நிலந்தொடு காலாக அமைய, மற்றொரு கால் வானோக்கி நீட்டப்பட்டு விண்காலாக மாறும். இதை ஆகாச சாரி என்று பரதம் பெயரிடும். இந்தக் காலமைப்பையொட்டி உருவான சோழர் காலத்துப் படிமம் ஒன்று திருவாலங்காட்டில் ஊர்த்வதாண்டவ மென்று தவறாகப் பெயர் சூட்டப்பெற்று கரணப் பார்வையிலிருந்து தப்பிப் போனது. முற்றிலும் விஷ்ணுகிராந்த இலக்கண வட்டத்தில் பொருந்திடும் இந்த அழகுத் திருமேனி எட்டுத் திருக்கைகளுடன் ஆடும் சிவனாரின் திருக்கோலமாய் உருக்கொண்டிருக்கிறது. இடக்கைகளுள் இரண்டு ஆட்ட விரைவுக்கும் காலின் வீச்சுக்கும் ஏற்ப, உடலைச் சமநிலைப்படுத்த, அர்த்தரேசிதமாயும் வேழக்கையாகவும் அமைய, மற்றவை பாம்பும், தீயகளும் கொண்டுள்ளன. வக்கைகளுள் பின்னிரண்டில் முத்தலை ஈட்டியும், உடுக்கையும் உள்ளன. ஒரு கை லதாவாக துவள, முன்னை காப்பு முத்திரையில் கருணை காட்டுகிறது. வலக்கால் பார்க்கவாமாய் முயல்கள் மீது, இடக்கால் ஒரே நீட்டலாய், பாதம் விண்ணோக்கி அமையும்படி வீசப்பட்டுள்ளது. விரிசடையும், வலப்புறம் சாய்ந்து இடப்புறம் திரும்பிய முகமுமாய், இயங்கும், இந்தக் கரணக் கோலத்தின் உடலமைப்பு, ஈகமெய்ப்பாடுகளும் இதை ஓர் உன்னத செப்புத் திருமேனியாக்கிவிட்டன.

விஷ்ணுகிராந்தக் கால் வீச்சின் இடைப்பட்ட நிலையாக ஒரு செப்புத் திருமேனி உருவாகியுள்ளது. தில்லையிலுள்ள விஷ்ணுகிராந்த கரணச்சிற்பத்தின் மறுபதிப்பாய் வந்துள்ள இந்த புதிய வடிவமும் பூம்புகாரின் கலைப்படைப்புகளுள் ஒன்றாகும். வலப்புறம் பாம்பும், இடப்புறம் பிறையுமுள்ள சடாமகுடத்தைக் கொக்கிறதும் ஊமத்தம்பூவும் அழகு செய்கின்றன. இடுப்பில் அரையாடையும் அதன்மேல் மடித்துக் கட்டிய அழகியதொரு விரிப்பும் அமைய, விரிப்பின் தொங்கல், விசிறி மடிப்பாய் இருகால்களுக்கு இடையிலும் அழகாய் விரிந்துள்ளது. வலப்புற ஆடைப் பகுதி ஆடலுக்கேற்ப கீழே தொங்குகிறது. வலக்காலில் வீரக்கழல், இரு பாதங்களிலும் சிலம்பு, முகம் இடப்புறமுமாய்ப் பக்கவாட்டில் இலேசாய்ச் சாய, இடப்பாதம் தாமரைத் தளத்தின் மீது அக்ரதலசஞ்சாரமாய் ஊன்றியுள்ளது. வலக்கால் வலப்புறப் பக்கவாட்டில் இடுப்பளவு உயர்த்தி நீட்டப்பட்டுள்ளது. வலமுன்கை அர்த்த ரேசிதமாகவும், இடக்கை நெகிழ்சையாகவும் அமையப் பின்னகைகளில் தீயும், உடுக்கையும், ரேசித வலக்கையின் கட்டை விரலும், கட்டுவிரலும் வலப்புறம் நீட்டப்பட்டுள்ள காலின் பெருவிரலைப் பிடித்திருப்பது போல் காட்டப்பட்டுள்ளன.

பரதரின் கரணங்களில் இறுதியிடத்தைப் பெறுவது கங்காவதரணம். கங்கையைப் பெற பகீரதன் தவமிருந்த கதை கம்பரால் கூட சொல்லப்பட்டுள்ளது. கபில முனிவரின் சாபத்தால் சாம்பலாகிப் போன தன் முன்னோரின் உயிரை மீட்க வழியுண்டா என்று பகீரதன் வசிட்டரைக் கேட்க, அவர் நான்முகனை நோக்கித் தவமிருக்கச் சொல்ல, பதினாறாயிரம் ஆண்டுகள் தவமிருந்த பகீரதனுக்கு நான்முகன் தோற்றம் காட்டினான். முன்னோர் உயிர் மீட்க வழி கேட்டான் பகீரதன். 'கங்கை வந்தால் வழியுண்டு. ஆனால் பொங்கிப் பெருகி வரவல்ல ஆகாய கங்கையின் வேகம் தாங்கும் வலிமை முக்கண்ணனான சிவபெருமானுக்கே உண்டு. எனவே சிவபெருமானை நோக்கித் தவமிருந்து, அவரால் கங்கையை ஏற்றுக்கொண்டு உதவ முடியுமா என்பதற்கு' என்று கூறி மறைந்தான் நான்முகன். மீண்டும் ஒரு பதினாயிரம் ஆண்டுகள் தவமிருந்த பகீரதனுக்குச் சிவபெருமானின் அருள் கிடைத்தது. 'வரட்டும் கங்கை தாங்குவோம் நாம்' என்ற நன்மொழி பெற்ற மகிழ்வால், கங்கையை, வருதல் வேண்டி ஐந்தாயிரம் ஆண்டுகள் தவமிருந்தான் பகீரதன். கங்கை தோன்றினான். சிவனால் தன்னைத் தாங்க முடியாது எனச் செருக்கிய கங்கை 'மீண்டும் சிவனையழைத்து உறுதியாய்க் கேட்டுக்கொள். பிறகு சொல், வருகிறேன்' என்று கர்வமொழி கழறி மறைய, பகீரதப் பிரயத்தனம் தொடர்ந்தது. இரண்டாயிரத்து ஐநூறு ஆண்டுகள் தவம்! சிவன் தோன்றினார். 'கவலற்க, கங்கை வரட்டும் ஏற்போம்' என்றார். கங்கையை வேண்டி மறுபடியும் ஓர் இரண்டாயிரத்து ஐநூறு ஆண்டுகள் சீறிப் பாய்ந்து வந்த கங்கையின்

கங்காவதரண சிவனார்



திருவரங்குளம்
லலிதகரணர்
(தற்போது தில்லி அருங்காட்சியகத்திலுள்ளது)

விய்ணு கிராந்தம்
திரிவிக்கிரமர் காலமைப்பில் இரண்டாம் நிலை
பூம்புகார் (தற்காலம்)



மயிலாடுதுறைக்கு அருகிலுள்ள ஆளந்தத்
தாண்டவபுரத்து ஊர்தவஜாநு கரணர்

வேகமும் கோபமும் கண்டு விண்ணிலே நடுங்கியது. ஆனால் இறைவன் தன் சடாமுடியில் கங்கையை ஏற்று, அவள் செருக்கடக்கி, கங்காதர மூர்த்தியானார். விண்ணிலிருந்து பொழிந்த கங்கை நிலத்தில் வாராது இறைவன் சடையில் விழுந்து மறைந்த காட்சிகண்ட பகீரதன். இறைவனிடம், கங்கையை நிலத்தில் இறக்க இறைஞ்சினான். ஓரிரு சடாமுடிகளை விலக்கி, சிறு பொழிவாய்க் கங்கையை நிலத்தின் மீது பாய விட்டார் இறைவன். பகீரதனைத் தொட்டந்த அந்தப் பெருவெள்ளம் வழியில் சன்னு முனிவரின் யாகத்தை அழிக்க, சிளந்த முனிவர் கங்கையை அருந்த, பகீரதன் நிலைமையை விளக்கி மன்றாட, சன்னு முனிவர் மனமிரங்கி விழுங்கிய கங்கையைச் செவி வழியே வெளியே விட, கங்கை பாதாள லோகம் சென்று சகரன் புதல்வர்களை உயிர்ப்பித்தான். 'பகீரதப் பிரயத்தனம்' என்ற சொல்லின் பொருள் இப்போது விளங்குகிறதா? முப்பதாயிரம் வருடம் தவம்! தொடர்ந்த மன்றாடல்! துவளாத சிந்தனை! தேயாத துணிவு! இறுதியில் வெற்றி. இது தான் பகீரதப் பிரயத்தனம். இந்தக் கதையின் பின் புலத்தில் விளைந்த ஒன்றுதான் கங்காவதரணக் கரணம். இதன் விளக்கச் சிறப்புகள் தில்லையிலும், குடந்தை சார்ங்கபாணி கோயிலிலும் உள்ளன. இக்கரணத்தில் அமைந்த செப்புத் திருமேனியைத் திருச்சியில் ஒரு கங்காட்சியில் கண்ட போது மெய்சிலிர்த்துப்போனது.

முதுகைத் தளத்தில் அமைத்து, தளத்திற்குக் குறுக்காகப் படுத்திருக்கும் முயலகன் வடிவம். அந்த முயலகன் மார்பின் மீது இட முன்கை இலேசாய் ஊன்றிய நிலையில், தலைமீழாய் நிற்கும் இறைவனின் கோலம் அதிசயிக்க வைக்கிறது. வல முன்கையைக் காக்கும் குறிப்பில் வைத்திருக்கிறார். பின் கைகளில் வலப்புறம் துடியும், இடப்புறம் தீச்சுடரும் உள்ளன. முகம் இடப்புறமுமாய்த் திரும்பிய நிலையில் உள்ளது. அழகாய்ச் சிரித்த அருள் முகத்தில் பொலிவும் கனிவும் பொசிந்திருக்கும் அழகு சொல்லுந்தரமன்று. தலைமீழாய் ஆடும் இந்த ஆடலில் இடுப்பு ஆடையின் முடிச்சுகள் பக்கவாட்டில் தொங்குவதற்குப் பதிலாகக் காற்றில் பறப்பது போல் காட்டியிருக்கும் புதுமை நெஞ்சைச் சூழுகிறது. உள்ளங்கால்கள் தெரிய, கால் களை முழுவதுமாய் நீட்டி வளைத்திருக்கும் மாண்பு. 'மேல் நோக்கிய நிலையில் கால் விரல்களும், உள்ளங்கால் களும் அமையும் வள்ளளம் இருபாதங்களும் இருக்க, முகம் கீழ்நோக்கிச் சிறிது சரிந்துள்ள நிலையில்' என்ற கரண இலக்கணத்தை வார்ப்பறிஞர் உள்வாங்கியிருக்கும் ஒழுங்கை நிலை நிறுத்துகிறது.

புஜங்கதராசிதம், வலிதம், சதுரம், வீஷ்ணுகிராந்தம், ஊர்த்வஜாநு, கங்காவதரணம் என்ற கரணக் காவியங்களைப் போலவே, இன்னும் எத்தனையோ கரணத் திருமேனிகள் நம் கண்களுக்குச் சிக்காத கலைப் பேழைகளாய் இருட்டறைகளிலும், அயல்நாட்டு அருங்காட்சியகங்களிலும் சிறையிருக்கின்றன.



ஊர்த்வஜாநு கரணர் (தற்காலம்)

இயக்க நிலைகளின் கண்ணேர படப்பிடிப்புகளாய் உருவாகியிருக்கும் இந்தக் கரணத் திருமேனிகள் தமிழர்தம் ஆடலறிவிற்கும் வார்ப்புத் திறனுக்கும் காலம் கற்றுத்தந்திருக்கும் கலைச் சான்றுகளாகும். வழக்கொழிந்து போய்விட்டதென கைகழுவி விட்டவர்கள் கூட, இந்த ஆடல் அசைவுகளை இன்று தேடித்தேடி கற்றுக்கொள்ள இந்தத் திருமேனிகளின் பொருள் பொதிந்த அழகுக் கோலங்களே பெரிதும் உதவுகின்றன. கலைத்திறனாலும், காலப்பழமையாலும், செய்தமைக்கப் பெற்ற கோலத்தாலும், சிறப்பின் சிகரத்தைத் தொட்டிருக்கும் இந்த கரணக் காவியங்களைக் கண்ணின் மணிகளாய்க் காப்பாற்றுவதும், பின்வரும் தலைமுறையினர்க்கு இந்த மரபு இரகசியங்களைப் போற்றும் பக்குவத்தை உண்டாக்குவதும் நம் தலையாய கடமையாகும்.